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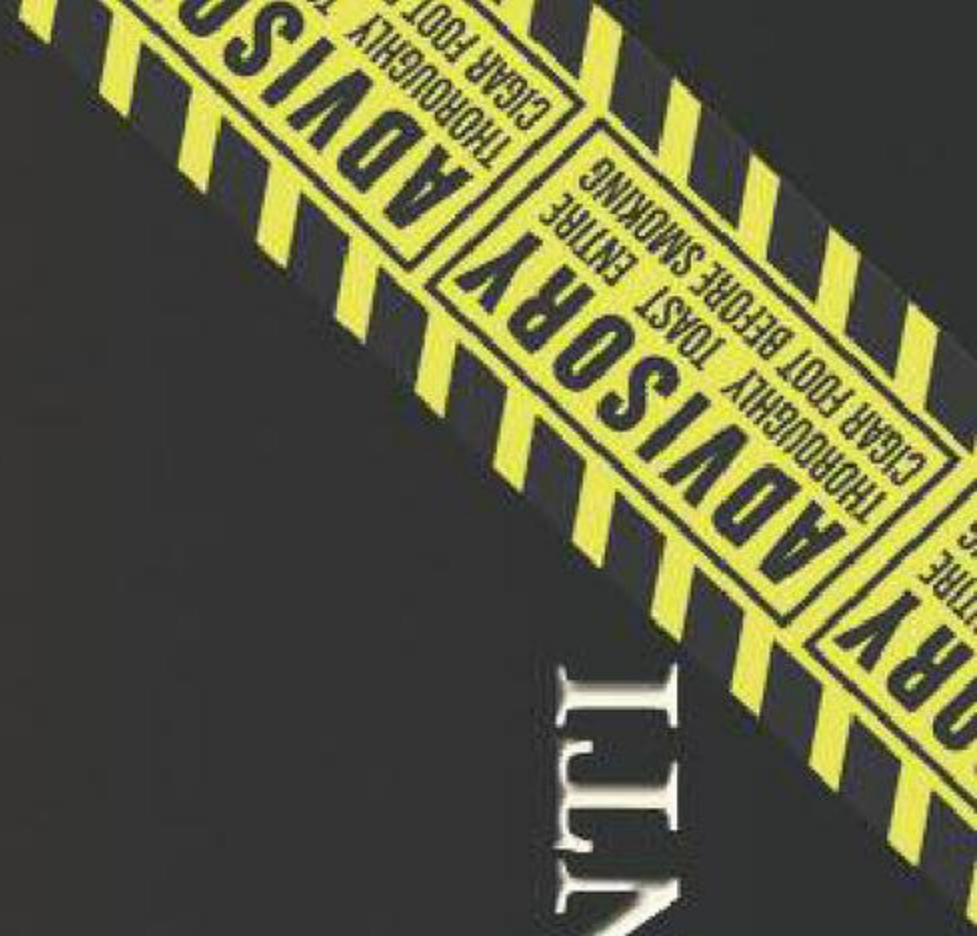
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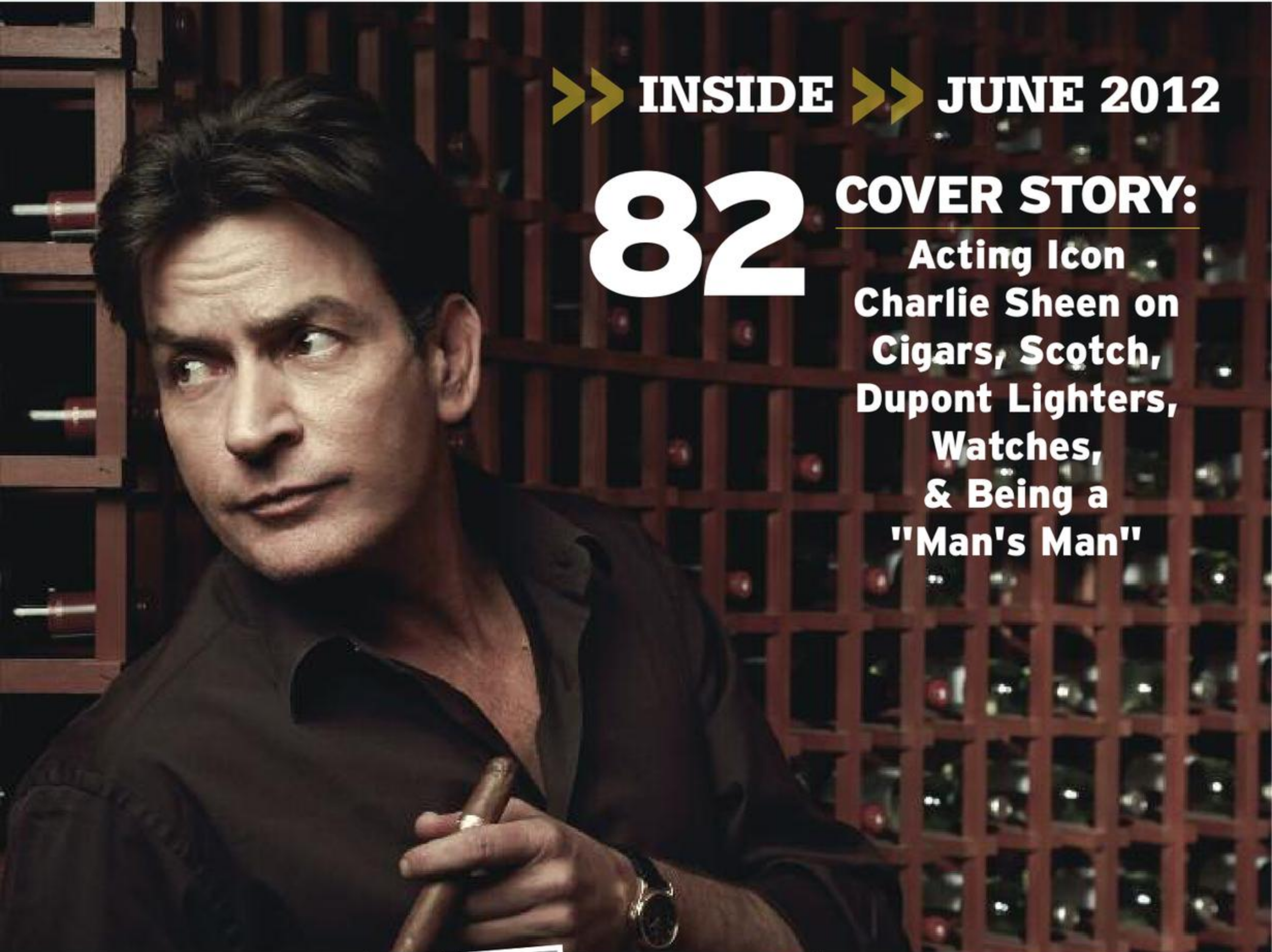
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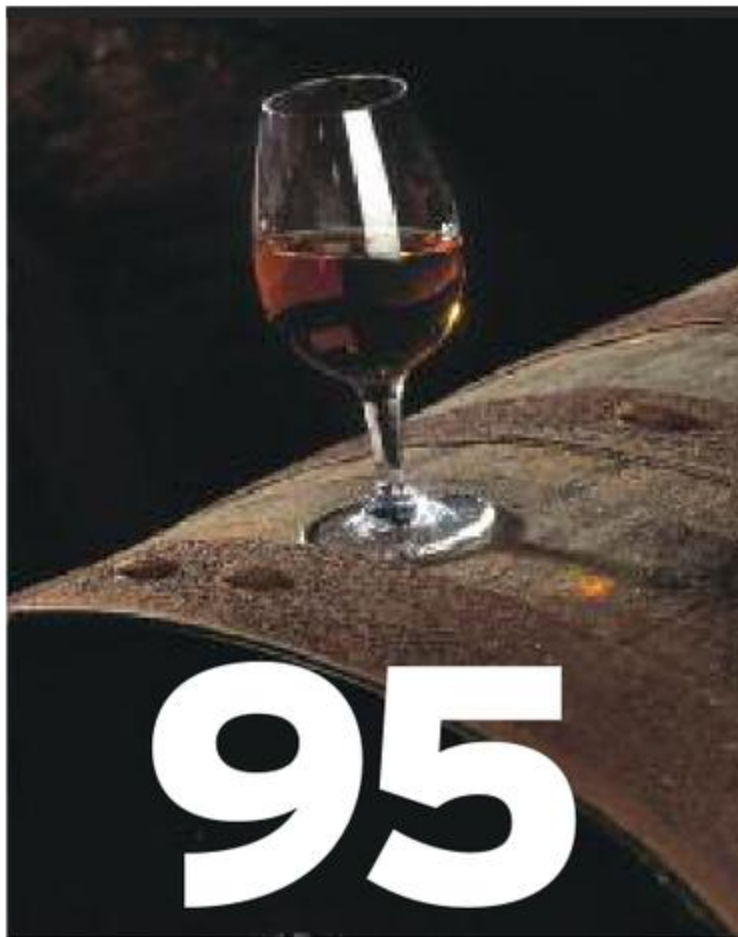
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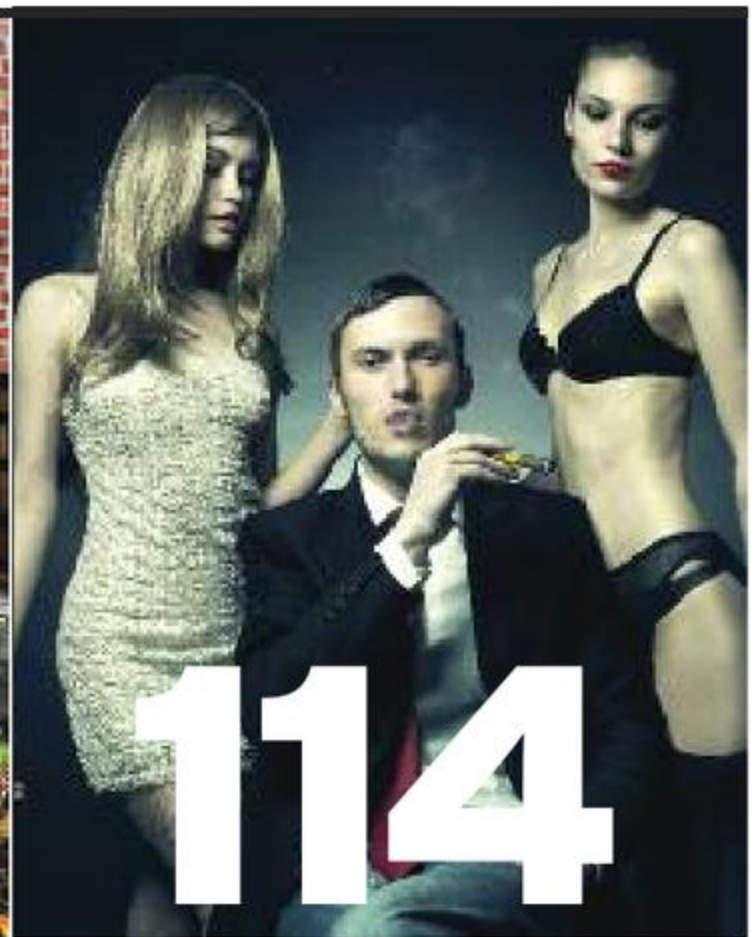
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Dear Cigar & Spirits Enthusiasts:

As I drink a Scotch and smoke my cigar, I reflect on the fact that I seldom have any alone time to think and take in what really is important. I believe in big dreams, I believe in people, and I believe that we all have a purpose- that sometimes we don't even realize yet. To me it should never be about ourselves or the few, we need to see what it is we can do for other people. How we can make them smile, laugh, and bring joy to their life.

See, sometimes I get asked the question, "Is what drives you about the money?" and I think most people would say "Yes!" – I personally say, of course the money is important, but if you invest and believe in other people, the money will come. Money then will come second to people and money will come naturally.

I will never forget when I first started payroll with new employees and I went to dinner with one of them. He is a single father who works hard and breaks his back, everything for his son. His son shows me his brand new shoes that his father just bought him. I looked at those shoes and knew that because of his hard work, and because of the company I own, I assisted him in getting those small shoes. That was worth more than any million dollar deal that I hope to make. It made me realize why I do what I do. I do it for other people, not me. As we all go through our daily lives, we are often too busy or too stressed, or somehow preoccupied, that we don't stop to think why it is we do what we do. I'd like to think that we all really do it not only for ourselves, but for someone else also.

I want to dedicate this issue to the dreamers. The people that, even though one day may not ever achieve fully what they wanted to, they lived life, loved, and shared great moments, and always thought of everyone else. It's not always about how many lives you touch, but when you do touch, make it extraordinary. So lift up your glass, pass a cigar, and give cheers to those who are important to you.

Slainte!

Lincoln B. Salazar
Chairman & Publisher

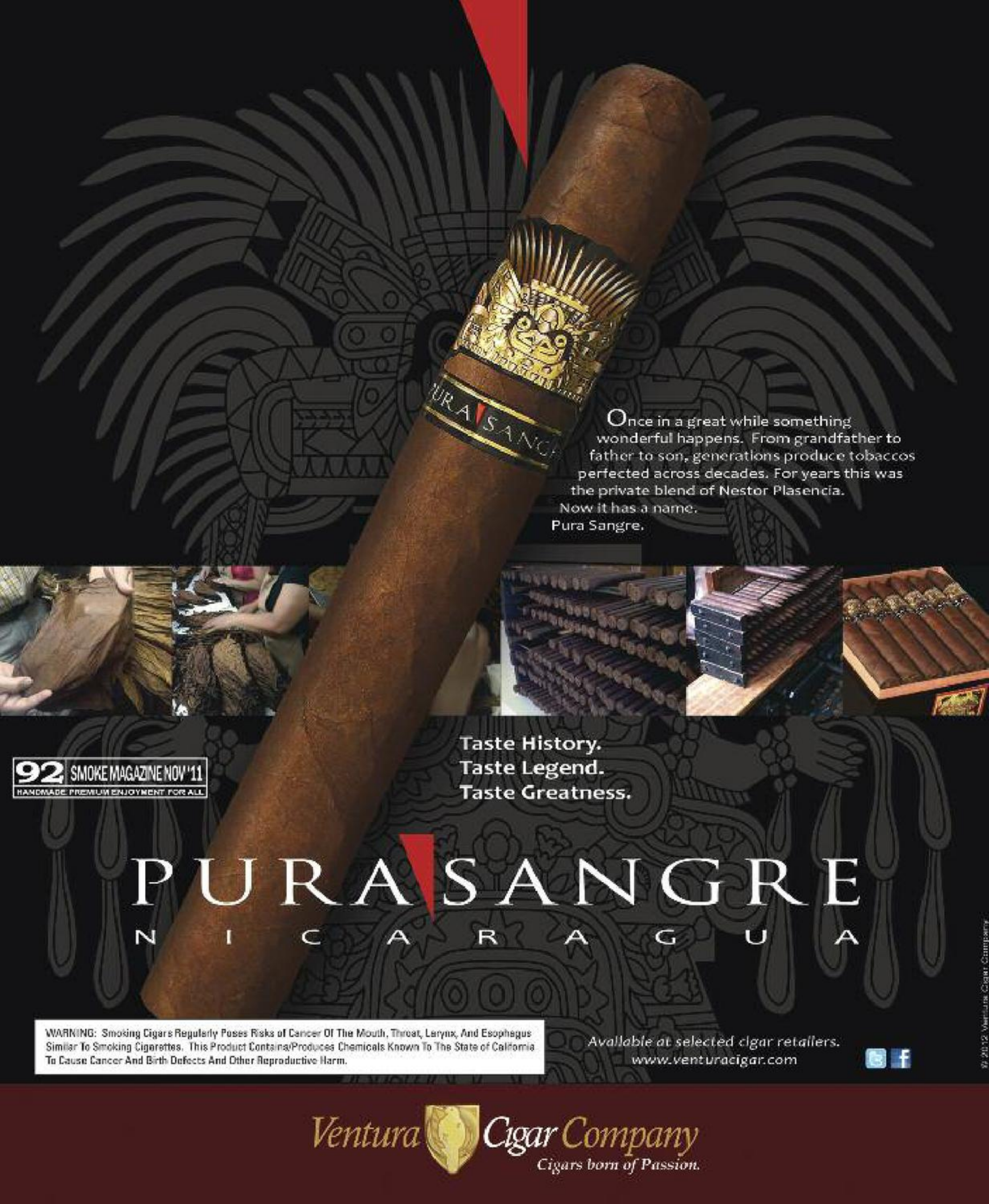
►► "I want to also dedicate this issue to Al Kau. Thank you for all you have done over the years as a true gentlemen, mentor, business man, father figure and friend. Al watches *Two and a Half Men* at least twice a day."



Lincoln Salazar,
Chairman
& Publisher



Al Kau



Once in a great while something wonderful happens. From grandfather to father to son, generations produce tobaccos perfected across decades. For years this was the private blend of Nestor Plasencia. Now it has a name. Pura Sangre.



92 SMOKE MAGAZINE NOV '11
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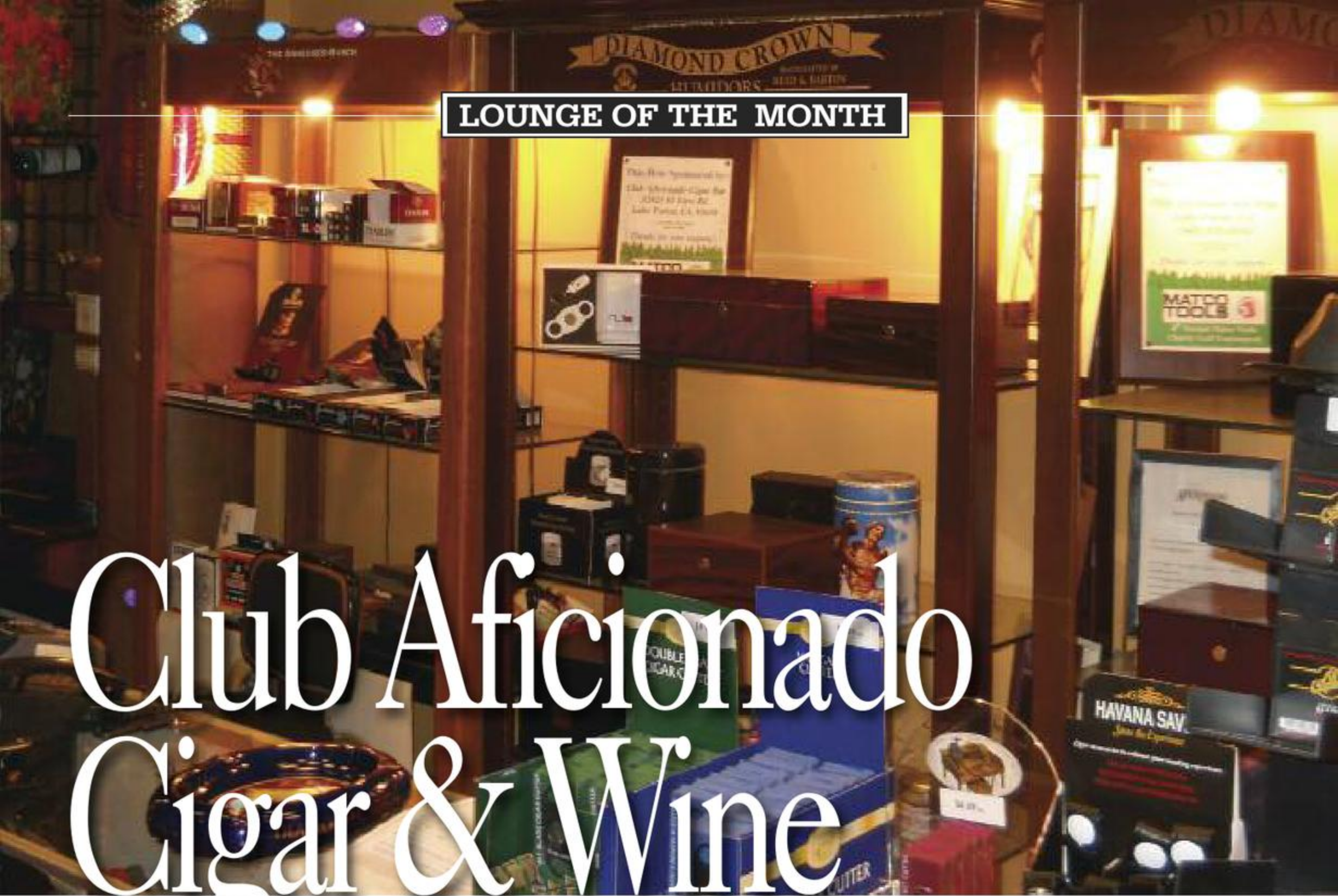
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A photograph of the interior of Club Aficionado Cigar & Wine. The lounge is filled with shelves and display cases containing various cigars, lighters, and accessories. A large sign at the top reads "DIAMOND CROWN". The lighting is warm and focused on the products.

LOUNGE OF THE MONTH

Club Aficionado Cigar & Wine

AN ELITE DIAMOND CROWN LOUNGE

PROVIDING A FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE FOR OVER A DECADE

by J. MARSHALL SENKARIK

Nestled into a busy shopping center in Lake Forest, California is an unassuming storefront that belies the exclusive, posh, environment inside. The “Members Only” parking places out in front give subtle hints, but be prepared to be surprised when you step into Club Aficionado Cigar & Wine. The front double doors of the private cigar lounge open up into an elegant display area and lobby. There are the usual offerings of lighters, cutters, and high end accessories that adorn the front cases of any cigar shop, but Club Aficionado does things a bit differently.

Artwork adorns the walls behind the register, most done by local artists, and the muted lighting gives off a bit of a gallery feel. The columns are painted a smoky brown, blending with the parchment and weathered wood of the lobby. It is only after a second look that you realize they are painted to mimic the fine cigars contained within.

The large, walk-in humidor is glass encased to show off its wares. Its cigar filled walls beckon smokers to come inside and pick up a stick, and upon opening the door, they are met with the sweet, leathery aroma of fine puros. There are private lockers for club members to store their purchases. And for those who do not have their own walk in humidor, the selection offered by the lounge's humidor is broad and high end, just what would be expected from such well-established lounge.

Club Aficionado has been in its current location at 23825 El Toro Road in Lake Forest for more than 10 years now, and they are among a limited number of lounges to be granted the elite Diamond Crown Lounge status. The owners, Shawn and Angela Mostashari, are always there. They will serve you themselves, creating a family atmosphere that is seldom found outside of the cigar world. They have been in the cigar industry for over a decade, and are more than happy to help inexperienced smokers with their selections.



What really sets Club Aficionado Cigar & Wine apart is what lies behind the large double doors in the lobby. Club Aficionado is one of the only cigar lounges in Southern California to offer a full bar, in addition to a full restaurant menu. The lounge is dimly lit and comfortable, with an exclusive feel that is both high end and homey. There are plush leather couches, big screen televisions, including a massive state of the art projection screen TV, and classic artwork adorning the walls of this members' only section. There is always someone there, even in the early afternoons, enjoying a lunchtime cigar and watching CNBC or ESPN. After all, who doesn't enjoy some company with their smoke?

There is a rat pack meets the 21st century feeling that is only augmented by the Frank Sinatra records and 50's era artwork on the walls. The bar at the back is the main focal point of the lounge, drawing its members ever farther into the comfortable confines of posh exclusivity. Club Aficionado is fully stocked with the finest spirits, no matter what your pleasure. Whether their members enjoy a 12 year old Macallen with their



cigar, a tawny port, or a Belgian beer, Club Aficionado can accommodate. Of course there is also a great selection of wines for the wine connoisseur.

Their food is a delightful mixture of primarily Persian cuisine, with some American fare as well. They also provide catering services and private parties for their members. No matter the occasion, Shawn and Angela are more than happy to take care of their customers. They are truly friendly and mean for the best of their customers and members, making everyone part of the family.

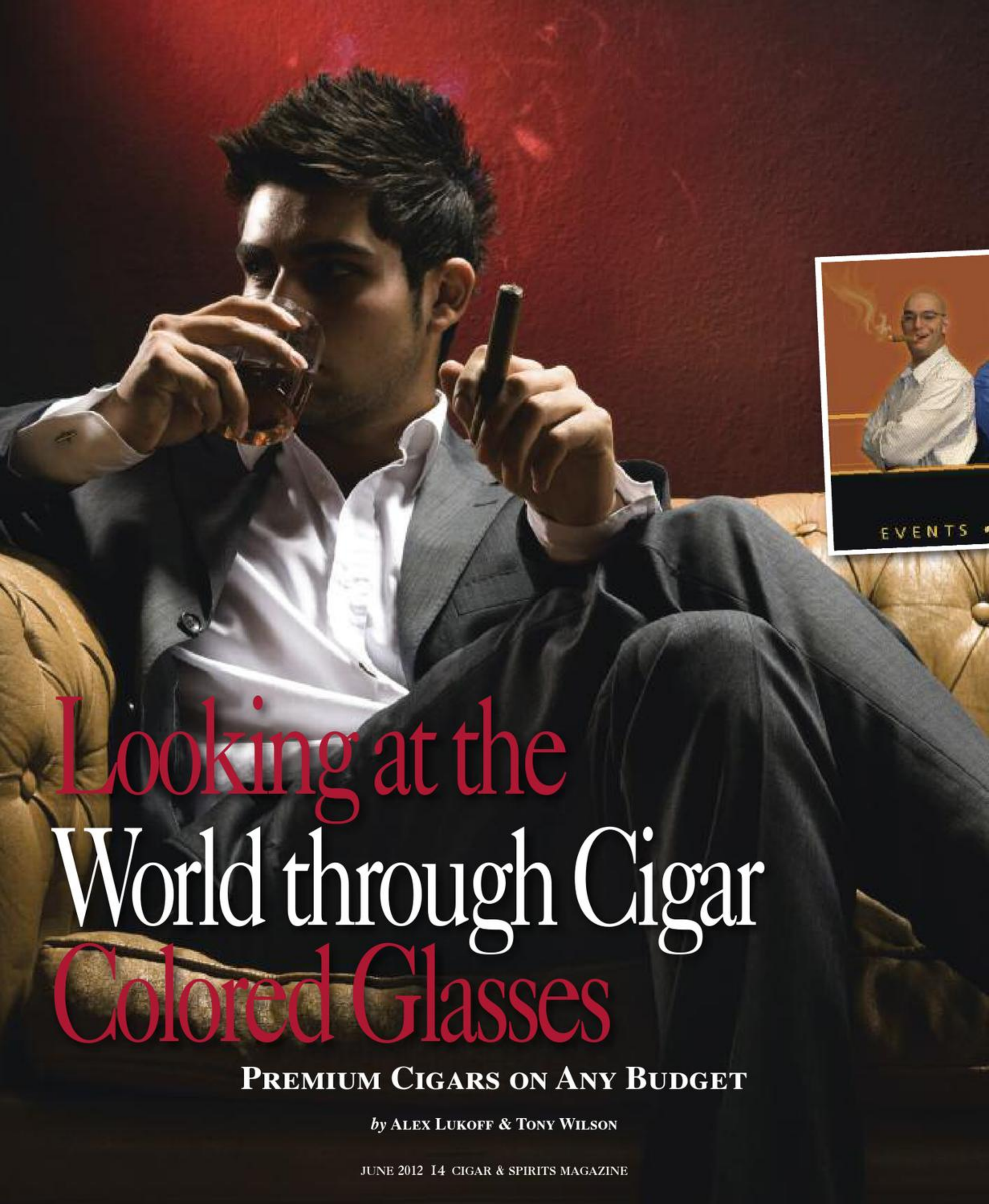
Club Aficionado Cigar & Wine Lounge is not your average lounge. It is quintessentially Californian, combining the laid back feel of Southern California, combined with high end luxury. Whether or not you're a member, this Diamond Crown Lounge is a very welcoming place to pick up a cigar. If you decide to become a member, or are the guest of a member, you will surely want to take full advantage by enjoying a cigar, a good drink, some delicious food, and the company of friends, all while watching your favorite sporting event on a state of the art TV. Check out this issue's Lounge of the Month at www.acigarbar.com.



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Looking at the World through Cigar Colored Glasses

PREMIUM CIGARS ON ANY BUDGET

by ALEX LUKOFF & TONY WILSON

JUNE 2012 I4 CIGAR & SPIRITS MAGAZINE

Cigar smoking has a deeply entrenched reputation as being an opulent pastime for blue-bloods and captains of industry. An image that we all know flies in the face of the average cigar smoker and the average cigar. For whatever reason, people associate cigar smoking with wealth. And while we may all dream of smoking exclusively Ashton VSGs, Davidoffs, Behikes and Fuente OpusX, those of us in the know feel no need to break the bank in the pursuit of a perfectly pleasant puro. Whether or not we have the means to do so.



A more interesting question is: how did cigar smoking get branded as a hobby for the elite? An expensive luxury out of the reach of the average proletariat? Surely there are a few reasons- possibly it's the images of Winston Churchill or Michael Jordan smoking, or the movies portraying corporate fat cats puffing a cigar. But I think it really has to do with that one equ-

uity that is so hard to come by- time. Using your average robusto-size cigar (5" long by 50/64ths of an inch thick) as a benchmark, you'll need a good 45 minutes to dedicate to smoking. And while you're smoking, you can't usually clamp the cigar in your teeth like a pipe or a cigarette- it'll get soggy. So not only do you need three quarters of an hour, but you need a free hand as well.

With the dual necessities of time and physical preoccupation, the very act of cigar smoking precludes you from certain manual labor-related activities, and takes too long to sneak off for a quick fix or to stretch out a lunch break for an extra 5 minutes. If you were an average laborer, as the thinking goes, you would never have the opportunity during your day to make smoking cigars part of your routine, right? Wrong! The reality is that most people dedicate time in the evenings, or over the weekend to enjoy a great cigar. Which leads us into our beloved cigar lounge and public humidor.

There was a book written a few years ago that talked about the rise and fall of bowling leagues in the United States. Basically what it said was that more games of bowling are being played now than ever before in our nation's history, but that the number of games being played alone by individuals is much, much higher than ever before. People used to socialize and gather at bowling alleys in leagues- they'd have teams, practices, and league games. And, as Walter Sobchak so elegantly reminded Smoky with a little assistance from his sidearm, league games used to be very important. Now people go bowling alone! Which is fine, but we used to be a society that was built of groups- now we're much more individualized. Fortunately, we can still gather at cigar lounges to be together, to smoke new cigars, and to gain the camaraderie

that is missing so prevalently from our society.

Lounges are, in our opinion, the backbone of the cigar community. People of all walks of life, all incomes and aspirations, can freely gather in these smoke-filled havens of personal freedom and dedicate that gift of time to the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake. Modern cigar lounges almost all have large, intimidating walk-in humidors, boasting dozens if not hundreds of choices. We've seen cigars retail for as much as \$200 per stick, and as little as \$2. If money and cost are of no consideration when you buy a cigar, you may not find the following information useful. For those who want maximum pleasure for minimum price, please continue.

It seems that the most popular price point in the cigar business is between \$10 and \$14 (California Tax is 31.73% of the wholesale price- your state may be different), but that's not our focus today. What do you do if you have \$8 burning a hole in your pocket? Or \$6?

The first place the cigar smoker on a budget should start is with the House Blend, if there is one. This is usually a cigar that the shop will have commissioned for them in bulk by any one of a variety of manufacturers. They are usually un-banded and in a tray display of some sort. Other shops will have "wine racks" built in their humidor for display. Ask your tobacconist about strength, flavor, and origin to see which one will work best for you. The other benefit is that lounges usually have good profit margins on these sticks, so you help yourself not break the bank, and you help the lounge stay in business.

Another popular route is to go with a smaller size than you usually smoke- if you like 6x60, try a Churchill instead. Or trade down to the smaller sized robusto. Or if you're hell-bent on a certain stick, see if they make a corona or petite lancero. The only problem with this solution, as elegant as it is, is that you end up with a short smoke. And if you're looking to fill an evening, you'll need to either buy a few or smoke at such a diligently slow pace that you're spending more time thinking about your smoking speed as opposed to your smoking pleasure.

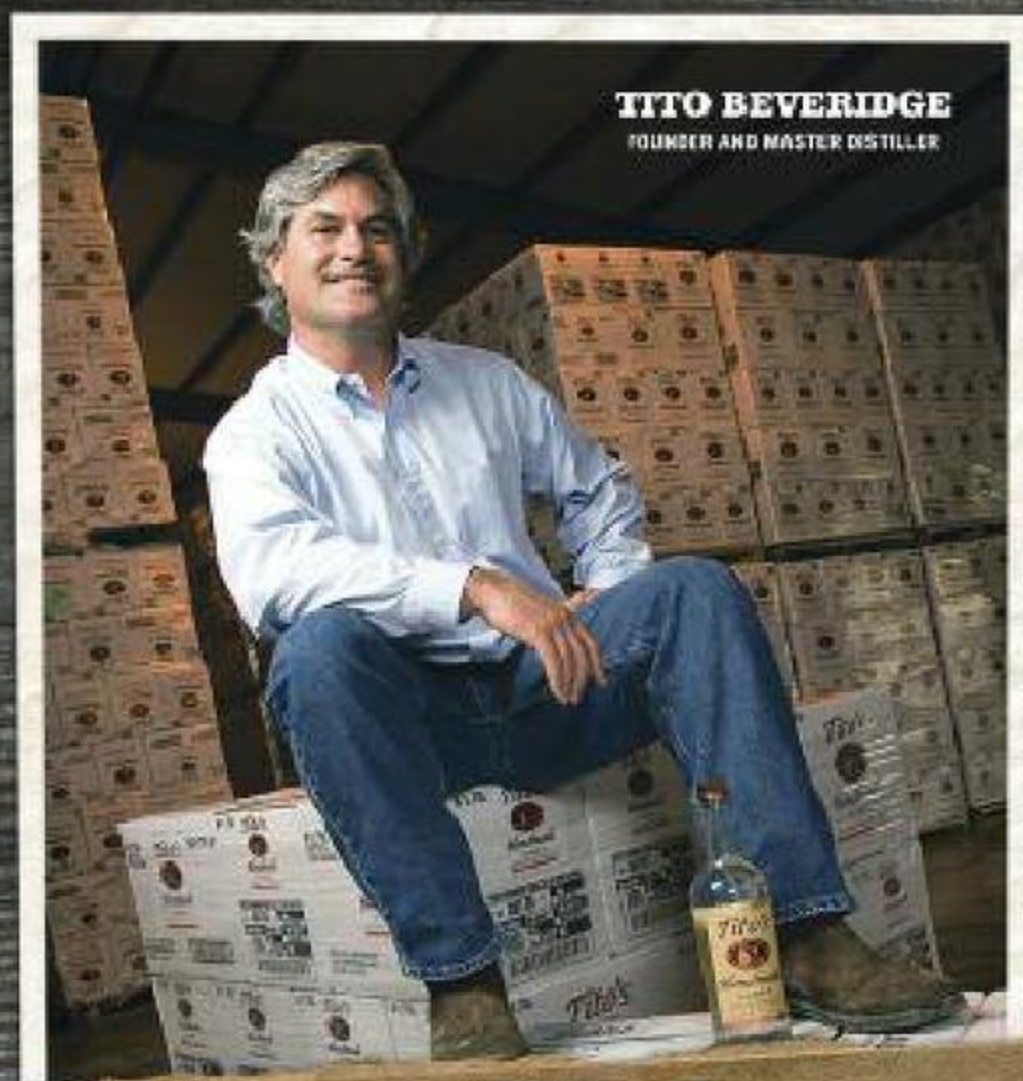
Our favorite way is a two-pronged approach. First, you have to learn about what you like- not the brand name, but the tasting notes and origins of the tobacco itself. Do you like mild Dominican cigars? Or are sticks with strong Nicaraguan ligero tobacco more your speed? Spend some time with your favorites and figure out what it is that you like about them. Then, once you can speak about your preferences beyond saying "strong" or "Cuban," start examining the humidor and looking at prices. Once you've selected a few candidates, ask the employees or the owner to talk to you about the taste profiles of what you've chosen.

And the most important part of smoking on a budget: be open to trying new things! Take some direction from your fellow cigar enthusiasts, seek out brands that you've neglected, and try to appreciate each cigar for what it is, not for what you want it to be. If you buy a value cigar and don't fall in love, at least you had the experience. You may not have money to burn, but as long as there's more than lint in your pockets, you'll have cigars.

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LOCAL POLITICIAN HONORS **FALLEN PATRIOTS**

THE FIRST EVER LOCAL “CIGARS FOR HEROES” MEMORIAL BENEFITS FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF TROOPS KILLED IN ACTION

by JON SHAKILL



sat down for an exclusive interview with Policy Advisor Steve Spernak. Mr. Spernak is a senior advisor to local politician Shawn Nelson, who is the Supervisor for the 4th District of Orange County, CA, as well as the Vice-Chairman of the Board. Our exclusive interview gives us a behind the scenes look at the event, which helped bring some closure and comfort to the local parents who lost sons' on the front lines of war. The event focused on memorializing lost troops who had called the 4th District of Orange County, CA their home. It is events like this one that bring people together, from all walks of life, from any political or non-political point of view, to honor their friends, neighbors, loved ones, over good food and a great cigar.

Jon Shakill: How did the idea of hosting a memorial event at a cigar shop come to be?

Steve Spernak: To tell you the truth, this was all Shawn. He's an avid cigar smoker, and so am I. Shawn's idea was to invite the families from our district, who had lost loved ones in war, to a Sunday BBQ to enjoy cigars and memorialize the fallen troops. This was his small way of saying "thank you."

Q: How did you end up at Vintage Cigars, in Costa Mesa, CA, which is not specifically in the Supervisor's district?

Spernak: Shawn kicked the idea around with staff before he closed on



Vintage Cigars. We had enjoyed the hospitality of Vintage Cigars and its owner, Ribhi Saoud, and the customers at Vintage all wanted to help. Ribhi had done cigar events and helped the Orange County Traffic Officer Association raise over \$40,000 for the families of 4 Oakland PD Officers. He's a good soul and offered us the entire store for a Sunday event.

Q: What was the goal of the event, and who coordinated it so that the families would show up?

Spernak: Marlon Chinchilla coordinated with the attending families, who loved the idea. Shawn actively promoted the event, in order to raise cigars for the platoons of Marine Corporal Claudio Patino, and Army Staff Sergeant Marc Arizmendez. The cigars raised were then sent overseas to these platoons, who had lost their comrades in battle. The hope was that the cigars would show the troops that the community at home is thinking about them and their loss.

The cigars gave the associates and commanders of our fallen patriots some time to reflect on the lives of their friends, and see how appreciated their service and sacrifices are. It also gave Shawn a chance to meet the families in person, share BBQ, great cigars, and extend our appreciation for their sons' ultimate sacrifice. We sent all of the best cigars we could get our hands on, everything from Gurkha to Rocky Patel, Diamond Crown, and Cohiba, as well as other great brands. Everything was completely donated.

Q: At the end of the day, how many cigars did "Cigars for Heroes" raise, and was it a success?

Spernak: It was a success beyond words. The families loved it- they really



**Jim Spernak (L)
helps brother Steve
Spernak (R) set up
the event**

got to see how much the local community cares about them and their sacrifices. They also appreciated the thoughtfulness of sending 500 donated cigars overseas for the best friends of Patino and Arizmendez to enjoy. Even the local patrons from Vintage Cigar shop collected from drive-up donors, directed traffic, and acted as if they were Shawn Nelson staff, with hospitality and interaction with the families. I've never been more proud of how guys who smoke cigars just stepped up and from their hearts took over to make the moment so special for these families.

Q: What surprised you the most about how the event turned out?

Spernak: It was really the people from the local community, and how they came together to make this event so great. Ian Lane, lead chef at Hilton Hotels JWA and Vintage Cigar local, delivered a full BBQ buffet donated by Hilton, cooked it overnight, and then set up the linens and hot-trays that morning. John Dade, the founder of a local cigar mixer group for business professionals, brought friends, Corvettes for display, and cigars. Nick Berardino, Director from the 18,000 member Orange County Employees Association, stopped by with a signed box of quality smokes as a donation. This memorial was a personal homage for Mr. Berardino, who is a former Marine machine-gunner, who did real combat in Vietnam. He lost some of his own close friends in combat. Supervisor Nelson gave Mr. Berardino a Marine Flag as a "thank you." And over a cigar- Romeo y Julietta- Nick told Shawn that "getting a decent cigar from home allowed guys in combat to escape reality for an hour. There wasn't anything better. You felt like a king for a week, even if only for an hour or so, you could share a cigar with buddies. Sending cigars to the troops in the names of their buddies killed in action is a first class gesture by you [Supervisor Nelson] to make that happen."



Supervisor Shawn Nelson presents Mrs. Arizmendez flowers, honoring her fallen son Marc

Q: I Understand that Supervisor Nelson gave certificates of recognition from the county to each family with Psalm 91 on it. Why that?

Spernak: It was Shawn's way of saying thanks from the people of Orange County, to the parents and families. Shawn gave the certificates for them to put on their sons' "hero wall," and also presented flowers for each mother in front of their son's photo. We posted each portrait with a dozen American flags in front of Vintage Cigars. It looked something akin to Arlington when the families arrived. Elegant and very patriotic, just the way Shawn envisioned.

Furthermore, Psalm 91 is thought by many to be the Warrior's Prayer. Shawn has it delivered to each family who has lost a loved one from his 4th District. If Shawn can't attend, he makes sure I get it hand-delivered



to the church, so family and loved-ones see that the entire community appreciated their lost loved ones lives and military sacrifice.

During the presentation, there were tears from all of us; tears of pride and appreciation, and also tears in sympathy for those who lost loved ones. It was an amazing 4 hours of citizens in

the community coming together in celebrating their heroes. We felt as if we had smiles from heaven, when the cigar smoke reached there from the memorial.

Jon Shakill: Mr. Spernak, thank you for sharing your insights on this great event with us.

Steve Spernak: No problem, it's my pleasure to share it with your readers, and in-so-doing, also show how cigars can bring us together.

Chateau de la Fuente



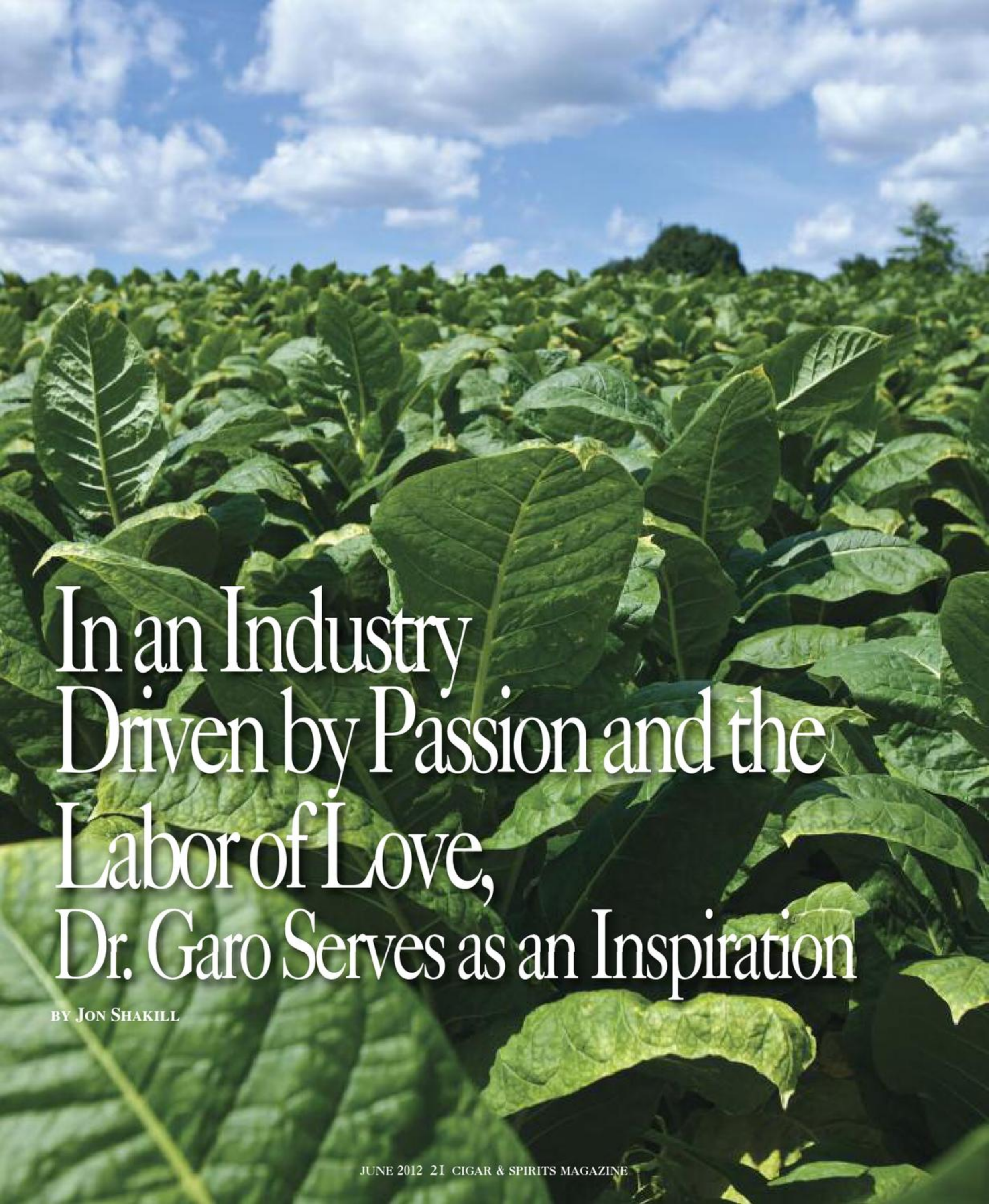
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BY JON SHAKILL



10TH ANIVERSARIO

The Garo Habano 10th Aniversario is an exquisite cigar blended with Corojo wrapper, Indonesian binder, and the combination of Seco Cubano/Ligero Peru, Nicaraguan, and Criollo fillers. This full bodied premium cigar is beautifully constructed and offers an intermingled array of complex flavors from spice to dark coffee and a hint cedar. Bold, yet clean and smooth, this incarnation is poised to take cigar lovers everywhere by storm.

Dr. Garo Bouldoukian started Garo Habano Fine Cigars in 1995. It was in 1996 that his first blend, the Blue Line, hit the market. Shortly after, his second blend was made available, becoming one of the first to use a Brazilian Maduro wrapper. 16 years later, Dr. Garo is still doing what he loves by producing personally blended cigars. It all started with a deep passion for understanding and appreciating every aspect of the cigar, from how they're constructed, to how different flavors are achieved through various blends, to the aromas, and the process behind making this finely crafted luxury item. Today, there are 7 different lines of Garo Habano Fine Cigars, all with unique blends.

What's amazing about Dr. Garo, is that he's been able to stay in business for this long, and create so many different blends, operating as what he calls a one-man show. The man is involved with every aspect of his business, operating as a true boutique company. From blending the cigars, to marketing, selling, distributing, and sharing them with individuals, Garo is driven by a deep passion that allows him to carry the load without feeling as if it's work. And the cigar company is not his only business—he also owns and operates a chiropractic business that he's deeply passionate about.

When I spoke to Garo, he told me: "I graduated medical school in 1998 and started my chiropractic business. When that happened I realized there were two major things in life that I'm passionate about: cigars, and my chiropractic business. So every day when I wake up in the morning, whether I'm dealing with my cigar business or my private practice, I never feel like I'm going to work. Who else can say that?"

Not many people can say they wake up every morning and do what they

truly love. One thing that's true about the cigar industry though, is that the people that drive it and make it what it is, all wake up to do what they enjoy most. It's an industry driven by passion and Garo exemplifies this. He has been on the front lines of the industry even since he was a medical student, simultaneously operating Garo Habano Fine Cigars and earning a medical degree. He went to medical school in the Dominican Republic, where he was able to craft blends, run his business, and complete his degree.

He completed his degree despite people telling him to drop out of school because of the success of his cigar company. "When I start something I have to finish it, it's a belief that I have and what I live by. My father was a shoemaker, and I never forget my roots," says Garo. He's also been told once or twice to quit the cigar business, because of his success as a private chiropractor. But he insists that he must do both, it is his true calling, and in his words:

"You can't tell an artist not to paint. Even if the artist is flipping burgers for \$8 an hour, he will still spend \$50 on paint supplies. I've had people tell me to get out of the business but I just ignore that. I got into it because of my passion and love for cigars. I'm here, and I'm staying. I'm not going anywhere. I can't imagine my life without my cigar business, it's an integral part of me. You have to understand the culture of the cigar."

Today, Garo Habano Fine Cigars are available internationally in Germany, Kuwait, Dubai, Lebanon, Moscow, and Armenia, with major plans to go into China in the near future. After a strategic hiatus from the United States, Garo is starting to once again make his cigars available nationally. Following is a list of the cigar lines to be on the lookout for, you can also visit <http://garohabano.com/>



MADURO

The Garo Habano Maduro is made with a unique Brazilian wrapper, Dominican binder, and Piloto Cubano filler. From the first puff, the solid construction offers a smooth effortless draw. Flavors of dark chocolate and espresso open up as the cigar burns, leaving a hint of spice on the palate. Medium to full bodied, this is a premium cigar with a sweet and alluring aroma.



CENTUM

The Centum by Garo brings together a Habano Ecuadorian wrapper, Habano Honduran binder, and Nicaraguan filler tobaccos into an exquisite melody of complex and pleasing flavors. A creamy and toasty smoke, the Centum offers sweet spice and a hint of leather that any cigar connoisseur can appreciate. This is a medium bodied cigar that offers plenty of flavor.



15TH ANIVERSARIO

The Garo Habano 15th Aniversario boasts a dark, slightly veiny wrapper and a firm construction. The easy draw presents plenty of smoke with intermingling flavors of wood and fruit with just a hint of spice. This is an exceptionally smooth medium bodied cigar with a nice solid ash as it burns.

LA PREFERENCIA

The La Preferencia by Garo is made with Nicaraguan wrapper, Habano Honduran binder, and Nicaraguan filler. Offered in two sizes, the 7 x 54 Allegereto and the 6 x 58 Adagi, this is a great option for the lover of a large cigar. Flavors of nuts and spice are complemented by leather, with a hint of coffee bean on the finish of this medium to full bodied cigar.



LOS LECTORES

The Garo Habano Los Lectores is constructed with a blend of Nicaraguan wrapper, Indonesian binder, and Ligero Cubano/Seco Piloto filler tobaccos from the Dominican. This cigar is made in the tradition of the old Havanas, being both smooth and complex. A medium bodied cigar that offers a depth of flavors, from an earthy roundness to a rich spice, with just a hint of citrus.

BLUE LINE

The Garo Habano Blue Line is blended using a Connecticut wrapper, Olor Dominican binder, and Piloto Cubano filler. The original cigar of the Garo Habano line, this is a mild cigar that offers a nutty flavor intertwined with cigar box cedar. This cigar is great as an introduction for new smokers, and also for seasoned connoisseurs who desire something light in the morning or as a pairing with lighter spirits.



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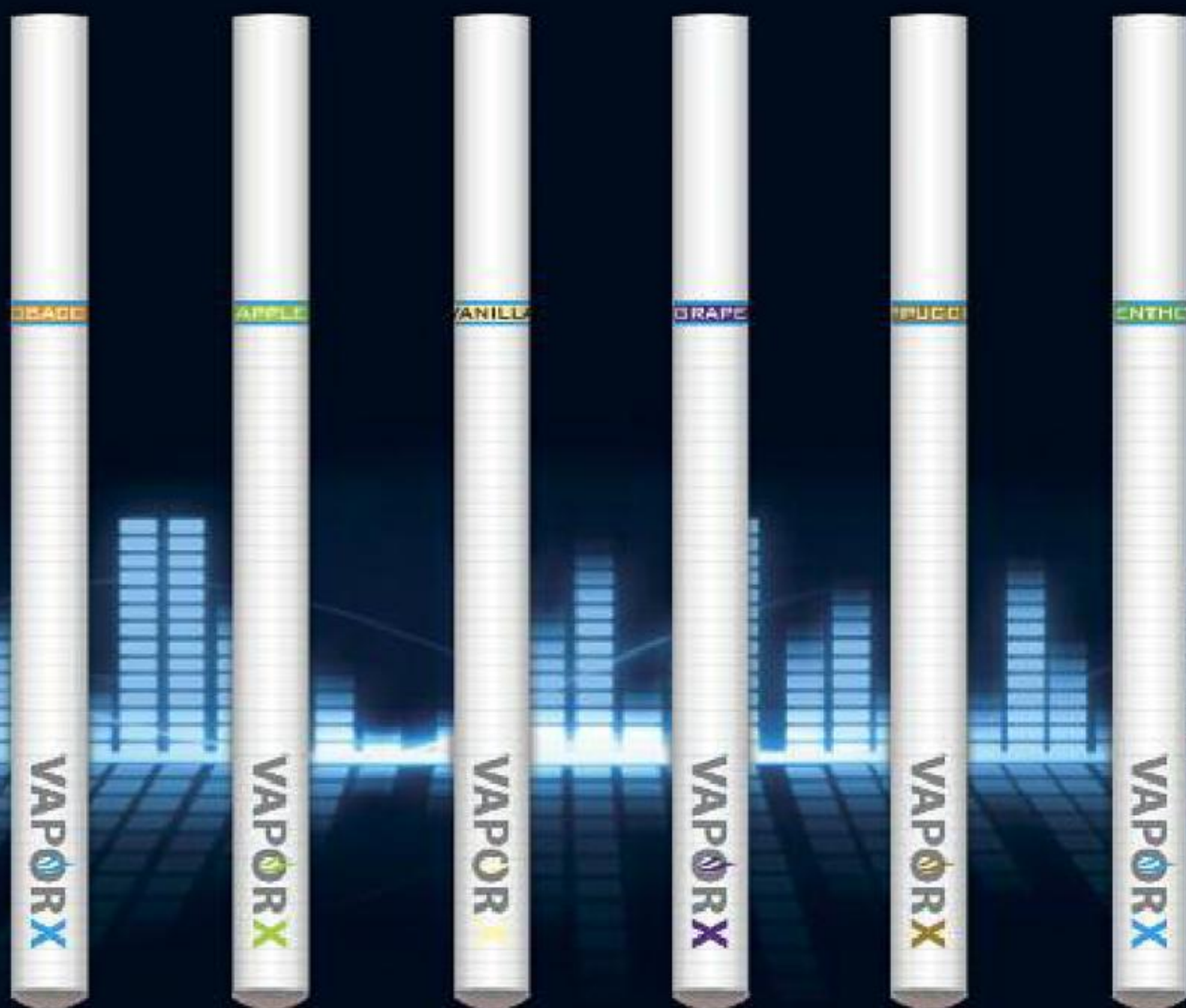
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Seasoning a Humidor

WAYS TO GET YOUR HUMIDOR WORKING PROPERLY

BY JON SHAKILL

So you just purchased a new humidor, and come to realize that it's really not much more than just a cedar-lined wood box. Okay, so it's a finely crafted beautiful wood box, and in a few cases an artisan made masterpiece, but how do you get this box to actually be an environment of stable humidity between 68-72%? And do so in such a way as to not ruin the cigars that you bought with your hard earned money? Well, start by doing an internet search, right?

Wrong, as there is a great deal of conflicting advice on the internet as to how you should handle this process. Ask your cigar smoking buddies how to do it then? I can guarantee you they will all have a different opinion on how to do it; I know from personal experience. So I will tell you what you need to know here.

So what does seasoning a humidor mean, and why is it necessary? Seasoning a humidor simply means turning it from a dry wood box, into an

environment of stable relative humidity between 68-72% (or an RH between 68-72%). This is necessary because a humidor is not ready to use when first purchased. The wood inside the humidor is thirsty, and needs to absorb a lot of moisture in order to satisfy that thirst. If the wood is still too dry when you put your cigars inside the humidor, you will be doing exactly the opposite of your intended purpose, because the wood will want to suck moisture from your cigars, rather than provide humidity. The short of it is, don't put any cigars in your humidor until after it's been seasoned.

Every humidor comes with a hygrometer, which is the gauge that measures the humidity inside a humidor. You want to make sure this is properly calibrated, so you get an accurate reading of the actual humidity your cigars are experiencing. There are a few ways to do this. By far the newest and easiest way to do this, with a great deal of accuracy, is to purchase a hygrometer calibration kit offered through the company Boveda (www.bovedapacks.com). The kit runs about \$5 plus shipping, and I haven't been able to find another company that offers this. All you have to do is put your hygrometer inside the kit, take it out the next day, and you're done. It has become an industry standard for calibration and humidification, but more on Boveda later. Alternatively, if you prefer the old-fashioned way, you can leave the hygrometer in a safe place outside for at least 4 hours or more, and at the end of the period, compare the reading on your hygrometer to a credible outdoor humidity reading.

So now that your hygrometer is calibrating, let's start with the basics of seasoning your humidor. I'll start with the old-fashioned, though still acceptable way, then present a very easy modern way as an option. Every humidor comes with some type of humidification device, usually a black rectangular or circular plastic piece, which covers a sponge-like material. To get this device working, you must first buy distilled water. Not tap water, not filtered water, not bottled spring water—distilled water. You can easily find this at the grocery store, and it costs about \$1.50 for a jug. You want distilled water because any minerals or other elements found in regular water will lead to impurities in your humidor.

Next, simply soak the humidification device in the distilled water so that it's fully saturated. Then completely dry it off, and shake it out to make sure there is no water leaking from the device—it's important that water doesn't drip onto the wood inside the humi-

dor. Now place the device into the designated holder, or if there isn't one, just lay it in the humidor. Another option is to fill the humidification device with a 50/50 solution of propylene glycol/distilled water, which you can find through most cigar retailers.

Now, some people say to wipe down the lining inside of your humidor with a damp sponge, slightly wetting the cedar inside. There are varying explanations as to why this is suggested, one is that it cleans the humidor, and another is that it helps speed up the seasoning process. Simply put, **DO NOT WIPE DOWN YOUR HUMIDOR WITH ANYTHING DAMP**; it's terrible advice and you shouldn't do it. And if you've been telling people to do this, stop now. Just remember, when dealing with cigars, nothing happens fast—whether it's aging them, smoking them, or preparing your humidor for them. By wiping down the wood with a damp sponge, and trying to speed up the seasoning process, what you're actually doing is shocking the wood. This can lead to the lining of your humidor being cracked or warped, and potentially ruin your humidor.

The next step is to fill 3/4 of a shot glass with distilled water, making sure the outside of the glass remains dry. Put your humidor in a safe place, out of direct sunlight, where it will sit for the next several days or weeks. Then take a small piece of plastic, a plastic baggy for instance, and place it on the bottom of your humidor. Then carefully place the shot glass of distilled water into your humidor, onto the plastic bag. For clarity: you're not pouring the water in! You're just setting the glass containing water inside the humidor. Then close the humidor and let it be.





You may need to refill the shot glass once or twice throughout the day, but make sure to close the humidor when doing so. Another viable, and perhaps safer, option is to use a sponge instead of a shot glass. Soak a NEW sponge in distilled water so it becomes fully saturated. Then wring out the sponge so no water drips from it. Now place the damp sponge onto the plastic inside of your humidor and leave the lid closed for 24 hours. Repeat this process for no less than 3-4 days, and possibly up to a week. You want the wood inside the humidor to be slowly saturated, and remain moist. You're now ready to take out the plastic and glass, or sponge, and safely stock your new humidor with your precious cigars.

AN EASY WAY TO SEASON YOUR HUMIDOR:

A modern and extremely easy way to effectively season your humidor is with Boveda packs. Formerly known as Humidipak, Boveda is a Minnesota based humidification company, which sells specialized packets designed for humidors. After 15 years of research, Boveda has come up with the world's first two-way humidification device, meaning it can add humidity, as well as take it away. These packets are great for accurately regulating your humidor. They are available at several different levels of humidity: 65%, 69%, 72%, 75%, and 84%. If you choose to take this route in seasoning your humidor, all you would need to do is place the 84% packs inside your humidor, using 1 pack for every 25 cigars the humidor is designed to hold (i.e., 2 packs for a 50 count humidor). Leave the packs in your humidor for 2 weeks, and your humidor is ready to use.

Once you've seasoned your humidor, take out the 84% packs, and now you have the option of using one of the lower percentage packs, to maintain the humidor's level within plus/minus 2% of the designated percent-

age. This will largely depend on personal preference, as well as the general humidity and climate of where you live. People in Florida may want to consider using the 65% or 69% packs, whereas people in Nevada would want to use 72% or 75%. In places with less drastic humidity levels, the 69% or 72% packs work great. Even if you season your humidor in the older traditional fashion, the packs are great for ongoing regulation of the relative humidity in your fully working humidor. I personally use the 72% packs, which I've found keep my humidor working at exactly 70% RH with no maintenance needed. Each pack lasts approximately 2-3 months, and goes for \$3.95. Another great advantage of this new technology is when you're travelling with cigars. Whether you're taking them across the country in a travel humidor, or just carrying a few to the lounge in a plastic bag, you'll be able to maintain a consistent humidity level using the Boveda packs.

As you can see, there are some options when it comes to seasoning your humidor, and yet more options for how to keep it accurately maintained. The methods put forth here though, are guaranteed to get your humidor working properly if followed and applied with the necessary patience required. Following these steps will also get your humidor working without the risk of damaging the humidor itself, or your hard earned cigars. So the next time you overhear a friend telling someone to wipe down the inside of their humidor with a damp cloth, you have two options: either whack them over the head, or just quietly go about your business realizing that you know better (disclaimer: the author is not responsible for injury claims arising out of this advice).



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- No more hassle of using distilled water – zero maintenance
- Boveda's reverse osmosis membrane emits the purest water vapor available and eliminates the risk of mold and mildew – something refillable elements cannot do

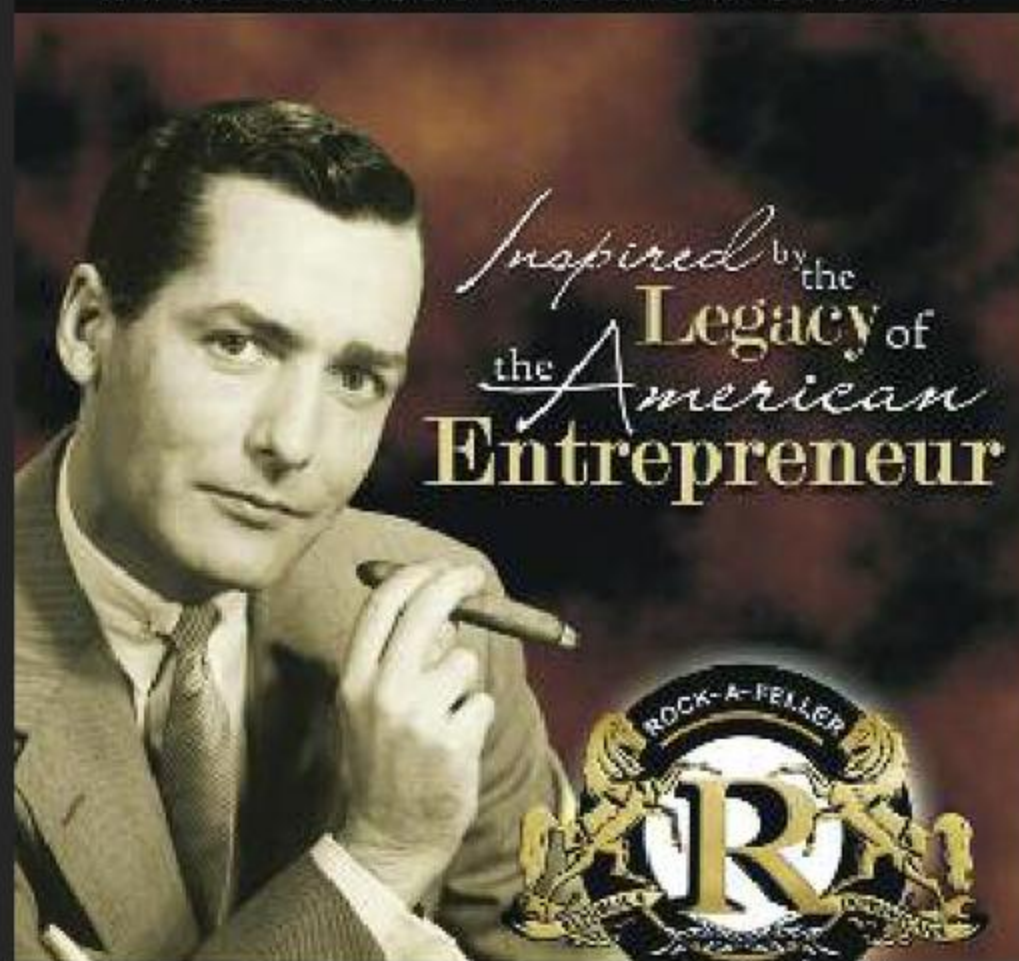
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The cigar feature in this issue of Cigar & Spirits Magazine brings you 10 superb brands for a total of 30 cigars. With prices ranging from \$6 to \$30 per cigar, we highlight premium hand rolled options at various price points. The price of a cigar rarely tells the whole story. The specific blends, tobaccos, aging process, soil, and a whole host of factors directly contribute to the quality and profile of a cigar. And the quality is largely measured by the experience a person has while enjoying a particular cigar. The experience is fundamental. If you're mowing the lawn or driving in your car, a less expensive cigar is probably more appropriate, and you can still find premium quality in a value cigar. If you have more time to really enjoy a specific cigar, and give it the attention it often requires, indulging in a more expensive stick can make sense. But that would depend on your mood, and more importantly, your budget. Either way, just remember that it is not the price of the cigar that makes it great; it's the experience you have with it.

People often differentiate cigars between daily smokes and special smokes. As the description would suggest, a daily smoke is a cigar that is geared towards enjoying every day. Even if you're not a daily cigar smoker, these are the cigars that you'd more willingly light up for no particular reason other than to enjoy a nice cigar. Daily smokes are also more affordable to most

CIGAR & SPIRITS
Magazine

Top Picks

people, so smoking one doesn't necessitate much of an occasion. On the other hand, the special smokes are the ones you save for celebrations, or noteworthy occasions. Weddings, the birth of a child, graduation, a nice bonus, or maybe just a weekend social gathering with friends—experiences that cater to spending the extra \$20. Of course, there are some readers who can afford any cigar, any day of the week, so the distinction is perhaps less important.

However you decide to classify your cigars, we present a line-up of 30 all from excellent brands. Some of them are more your "daily smoke" and some are great for special occasions. Others of them could actually cross over into either category. Give them a try for yourself, and let us know what you think.





EVIL 7 ½ x 52

With a dark and alluring wrapper, this toothy cigar is full of flavor and full bodied. Some spice and oak notes intermingle with leather and black tea on the palate. Blended with the rare shade grown Brazilian Mata Fina wrapper, Dominican binder, and Nicaraguan filler, the construction is superb and the draw is effortless.



CELLAR RESERVE 5 x 58

A brand new release from Gurkha, blended using an oily Criollo 1998 wrapper, aged Dominican Olor binder, and 15-year old Dominican filler. This vintage made cigar comes in figurado and classic shapes and is incredibly smooth. The nice draw produces plenty of smoke, and combines both sweet and savory notes on the palate. The taste of toasted oak merges with a hint of molasses, into a medium to full bodied meaty smoke.

Gurkha

NINJA 6 x 60

Shortly after lighting up the Ninja, the fragrant aroma that it produces is abundant and appealing. Made with a dark Brazilian wrapper, Dominican Criollo binder, and a mix of Nicaraguan and Dominican fillers, this blend is very balanced and flavorful. A robust medium bodied cigar, the Ninja is slightly sweet with just a hint of spice.





VAULT A-008 6 x 50

Previously unreleased, this blend from the year 2000 was rediscovered in the special blend book held in the Torano family bank vault. The Vault A-008 is made using a shade grown Nicaraguan Colorado wrapper, binder from Ometepe, Nicaragua and Jamastran, Honduras, and filler from both Esteli and Condega, Nicaragua. A-008 produces volumes of full bodied smoke with the effortless draw, and complex flavors from spice and wood, to cocoa and dark chocolate.



MASTER BY CARLOS TORAÑO 5 x 50

This is a creamy and leathery smoke made with Habano Ecuadorian wrapper, binder from Esteli, Nicaragua, and filler from Esteli and Jalapa, Nicaragua. Medium to full bodied, rich and bold flavors of smoked hickory and black coffee are rounded out with a touch of spice and cedar. A complex, yet very well balanced cigar.

Torano

LOYAL 5 x 56

The blend consists of a Sumatra seed Ecuadorian grown wrapper, Nicaraguan binder, and fillers from Esteli, Nicaragua and Dominican Piloto Cubano. This premium cigar offers incredible quality and flavor for a great value. With a great draw and solid construction, flavors of sweet molasses and coffee combine with a slight spice for an intriguing experience.



TEMPUS MEDIUS 6 6 x 52

Available in both Natural and Maduro wrappers, this is a full bodied cigar. The Natural wrapper comes from Trojes, Honduras, and the Maduro wrapper comes from Mexico. Both the binder and filler are from Trojes, Honduras. Subtle flavors from spice to espresso, as well as oak and nuts are present. With a good draw and adequate construction, this is an excellent cigar for the value.



PRENSADO 6 x 54

This is a box pressed, full bodied smoke, with intertwined flavors of spicy black pepper and sweet cocoa. This cigar packs a heavy punch, though the flavors are very balanced and appealing. An easy draw and great construction make this cigar a joy. The Prensado is blended with wrapper from Trojes, Honduras, binder from Nicaragua, and filler from Trojes, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Alec Bradley



FAMILY BLEND 7 x 50

Created expressly for the fathers of Alec Bradley's three principal executives, this cigar is blended with a wrapper from Trojes, Honduras, binder from Indonesia, and filler from both Nicaragua and Honduras. This is a medium bodied cigar with a spectrum of complex flavors ranging from earthy, to wood and leather. The wrapper has a nice oily sheen that complements the pig tail cap.



EL DIARIO TORPEDO 6.125 x 52

At first sight, the silky deep brown wrapper with the sweet smell of tobacco is apparent. The draw opens up as the cigar is smoked, and is impacted on the cut given the torpedo cap. The rich flavors of sweet tobacco intertwine with black pepper at the head of the cigar, making it both sweet and spicy. A Honduran Rosado wrapper surrounds a double binder from Honduras, and Nicaraguan Corojo and Criollo filler. Medium bodied, this is made to be an everyday cigar.

La Palina

EL DIARIO ROBUSTO 5 x 52

The Robusto size El Diario has a great draw and fantastic aroma. A subtle hint of vanilla merges with wood and raisin. Medium bodied with some power, this cigar burns slowly and packs complex flavor. The blend is the same as the torpedo, with Honduran Rosado wrapper, a double Honduran binder, and Corojo and Criollo filler from Nicaragua.



FAMILY SERIES PASHA 7 1/4 x 50

Pasha was the family nickname for William S. Paley, the father of La Palina owner Bill Paley. William S. Paley was founder and Chairman of CBS. This big cigar is constructed using a Costa Rican wrapper and binder, with filler from Honduras and Nicaragua; the foot of the cigar is left unfinished. A mild to medium bodied smoke, the Pasha is a creamy and balanced blend with hints of spice and sweetness.





CONNECTICUT 5 x 50

Blended using a rustic Ecuadorian Connecticut Shade wrapper, and Dominican binder and filler, this is a premium cigar at a great value. Characterized by a fantastic draw that delivers plumes of smoke, it is well-balanced and mild. Very mellow with a buttery flavor that combines hints of wood and a slight spice. Great for a new cigar smoker or for the veteran who desires something lighter.



COROJO 7 x 50

A solid medium bodied smoke, constructed with a triple cap using Ecuadorian Corojo wrapper, with Dominican binder and filler. It's a smooth and flavorful, medium bodied cigar that has a subtle spice. This is a premium hand-rolled stick at a great value. The nice draw delivers plenty of unique and complex flavors.

C&C Cigars

LIMITED RELEASE MADURO 6 x 52

This is a Dominican puro, with a dark and rustic proprietary Dominican Maduro wrapper, encompassing binder and filler from the Dominican. This cigar delivers a combination of rich earthy and sweet natural Maduro flavor. Medium to full bodied, no dye or oils are added to create the deep dark color of this premium value cigar.





Z-CLASS 546 P 5 ¼ x 46

Don't be fooled by the small size of this cigar, as it packs a serious punch. Full bodied and aromatic, it's comprised of a Dominican wrapper, Peruvian binder, and filler from Nicaragua and Honduras. The interesting blend creates bold and zesty flavor, with spice that's apparent. Z-Class offers the fullest bodied profile of any of the Zino Platinum cigars from Davidoff.

Zino Platinum - Davidoff

CROWN SERIES BARREL 6 x 60

Constructed using an Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, USA Connecticut Shade binder, and filler from the Dominican and Peru, this is a unique, complex, and flavorful cigar. Full of flavor, and medium to full bodied, this large cigar is smooth and creamy. About 75% of the filler is comprised using the strong Ligerito tobacco, while the Connecticut binder and wrapper are typically mild, creating an interesting balance.



SCEPTER SERIES GRAND

MASTER 5 ½ x 52

As with the Crown Series, the blend consists of an Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, USA Connecticut Shade binder, and filler from the Dominican and Peru. This cigar is not simply medium bodied, it is a complex balance between mild on one hand, and full bodied on the other. The flavor and aroma are full bodied owing to the 5 year old Ligerito filler, but the wrapper and binder mellow out and sweeten the overall experience.





CHATEAU GRAND CRU**PIRATE 6 x 52**

This Graycliff release is a combination of wrapper tobacco from Costa Rica, binder leaf from Ecuador, and three different filler tobaccos from Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Cedar notes are most pronounced, with flavors of cocoa, nuts, and some spice also evident. Overall the cigar exudes great balance and superb flavor with a medium body.



HERITAGE ROYAL DUKE 4 1/2 x 54

This short and stout cigar is blended with a Costa Rican wrapper, an Ecuadorian binder, and filler from Honduras and Nicaragua. Full bodied though smooth, and rustic in appearance, the taste of coffee and dark chocolate are the most noticeable on the palate. A hint of nuts and spice are also detectable in the creamy smoke.

Graycliff

HERITAGE ROYAL WINDSOR 4 1/2 x 52

Similar to the Duke, though constructed as a figurado, the Windsor is also made using a Costa Rican wrapper, an Ecuadorian binder, and filler from Honduras and Nicaragua. A full bodied cigar with a smooth and creamy smoke, leather and spice are apparent in addition to chocolate and coffee. These cigars are hand rolled and aged at the Graycliff factory in Nassau, Bahamas.





10 ANOS MADURO 5 ½ x 54

A dark and rustic 10 year old Nicaraguan Maduro wrapper surrounds both Nicaraguan binder and filler of this flavorful puro. Rolled at the Tabacalera Fernandez in Esteli, Nicaragua, this box pressed cigar burns evenly and has a great draw. Medium to full bodied, a hint of spice is apparent with elements of cocoa, leather, and earth. A surprisingly well aged cigar for the price point.



187 MADURO 6 x 50

A great value cigar, the 187 is a Nicaraguan puro, with wrapper, binder, and filler all coming from Nicaragua. The dark Maduro wrapper is slightly toothy with an attractive oily sheen. Medium to full bodied, the draw delivers plenty of smoke without a struggle. Sweet Maduro tobacco flavor blends with hints of chocolate, wood, and spice.

Esteban Carreras

HABANO NATURAL 5 x 52

Constructed with a natural Habano Nicaraguan wrapper, and binder and filler from Nicaragua, this is a medium bodied puro that occasionally takes on some full bodied characteristics as it's smoked. Lighter in appearance than the Maduro, the easy draw provides creamy smoke with notes of toasted nuts, hints of pepper, and some black coffee. A premium puro for a great value.





AGING ROOM 5 x 50

The concept of Aging Room is to bring you blends from rare and limited tobacco, only made in small batches. The tobacco of the Aging Room is all Ligero Habano from one of the best known tobacco farms in the Dominican Republic. Smooth, rich, with a nutty, leathery flavor and aroma, this puro is indeed a treat.

Oliveros

SUN GROWN RESERVE

5 x 50

The Oliveros Sun Grown Reserve is a true classic smoke when it comes to flavor and strength. With a Medium to Full body, this cigar delivers character, balance, aroma and strength. Made with purely Nicaraguan tobacco, the Sun Grown Reserve has a rich, complex tobacco aroma, and a flavor for all levels of smokers.



SWAG LIMITADO 99 6 x 54

The new Swag Limitado 99, is a limited edition that uses only extra aged Ligero tobacco with a wrapper from the 1999 crop. This is a single farm blend from one of the most well known tobacco farms in the Dominican Republic. With a medium to full body, this cigar is truly not your father's Dominican cigar.





BRICK HOUSE

SHORT TORP 5 x 52

Adding a sixth size to the Brick House line-up, this new cigar is a Nicaraguan puro hand rolled with an attractive and unique Nicaraguan Havana Subido wrapper. Medium to full bodied, flavors of cedar and leather intermingle with some spice and sweetness. Excellent construction and the torpedo shape concentrate flavors at the tip of the cigar. This is a great puro at a value price.



JULIUS CAESAR PYRAMID 6 1/2 x 52

Julius Caesar was the line created to honor J.C. Newman Cigar Company founder Julius Caesar Newman. Havana-seed wrappers are used for these hand-rolled beauties that contain five year-old Central American tobacco. Bold and rich, this line does its namesake proud, featuring coffee and woody flavors that are both spicy and sweet.

JC Newman

DIAMOND CROWN NO. 6 ROBUSTO 5 1/2 x 54

A high end premium cigar that is produced by Tabacalera A. Fuente in the Dominican Republic. A Connecticut Shade wrapper surrounds a Dominican binder, and 5 different fillers from the Caribbean and Central America. Aged for 5 years, this complex cigar offers a smooth and creamy smoke, with exceptional construction.



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**LA FLOR
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ROSES SINGLE BARREL**
by RICK RHAY



ne of the magical properties of art is its transportive quality, its ability to move us from where we are in the world to another place and time altogether. Whether executed in paint and canvas, film and lens, instrument and voice, or leaf and malt, the most cunning works of art are those which tran-

scend space and time, not only in themselves, but for the beholder as well. Such was the case when I recently enjoyed a La Flor Dominicana Ligerio Misterio cigar, paired with Four Roses Single Barrel Bourbon whiskey.

The cigar itself is a work of art. One imagines blender and brand owner Lito Gomez's vision, challenging his master torcedores to create a cigar the likes of which has never been seen before. A Perfecto in shape, the 7-inch cigar reaches a beefy ring gauge of 54 at its widest, tapering to a narrow head and foot, both of which are adorned with finishing flourishes of maduro leaf, set against a stunning Ecuadorian Sumatra wrapper. The balance of the blend is 100% estate-grown ligerio leaf from Gomez's own farms in the Dominican Republic. The construction is impeccable; the cigar is firmly rolled, and seamlessly wrapped down to the twisted maduro button head, with scarcely a vein in sight.

When tasted alone, the Four Roses Single Barrel Bourbon is rich with flavors of black cherry and citrus, with a pronounced oaky character nicely balanced against a spicy background and a robust, malty finish. It's a rich, amber-honey color, with a highly aromatic nose full of buttery, floral, and spicy aromas, best sampled from a proper whiskey tasting glass.

I begin the tasting with a fresh palate, and light the cigar first. The opening movements are full of tangy maduro from the unique foot, delivering plenty of texture, and a subtle, appealing spice. Within minutes, the opening maduro sequence has played itself out, giving way to a woody, peppery interplay between strength and subtlety. Here I reach for my glass and nose the liquor against the fresh woody aromas of the cigar. They call out to each other, one warm, the other cool, begging me to sip. I gladly oblige.

At first I'm greeted with caramel and cocoa beans, and my taste buds come to life anew. Neither of these flavors are overtly apparent in the cigar or the whiskey by themselves, though as I reflect on their separate tastings, I realize they were there, unnoticed, deep in the background. The whiskey lingers on my palate, and as I reach for the cigar again, I sense an herbal aspect also unseen at first. The pairing has taken on a life of its own. This is why we do this.

Then, as I go back to my glass, I smell it before I taste it, something alto-



gether unexpected. I'm suddenly back on the Hawaiian Island of Kaua'i, at the sugar plantation I visited 5 years ago, smelling and tasting the raw, unrefined sugar. The scent of the island surrounds me, the flowers, the dense aromas of lush plant life, and the caramel sweetness that permeates the very air of the place. It's undeniable, a moment of true delight. I can see the images in my mind's eye, though transformed from their original. I am no longer weary from many days of travel, and my sunburned skin no longer troubles me. All that remains are the sights, smells, and tastes, preserved in memory as the most ideal versions of themselves.

This should require no great leap of faith to imagine, though it's a greater challenge in execution than in conception. There's no doubt that cigars engage each of the five senses in their own way, but no sense is more closely tied to memory than that of smell. We all experience scent memory, and those wonderful moments are

stripped of distractions, leaving us with a delightful recollection of times and places past. Such is this case, as I recall the setting in my mind, and that sweet, earthy aroma overcomes my other senses.

I should point out that neither the cigar nor the whiskey is notably sweet, though they both contain subtle nuances that play on that aspect of taste. The observation is almost wholly olfactory, and is derived more nearly from the combined sensation of the malted aromas of the whiskey, coupled to the caramelized woody aromas of the cigar, such that neither one in isolation would evoke such a sensation, but when paired, combine to transform the experience in such a memorable way.

As the cigar progresses through the midway point, the flavors develop in depth and complexity, rendering the woody flavors into a toasted, oaky palate, enhanced by the parallel oaky qualities of the whiskey. It's a long smoke, and I refill my glass after an hour, having nursed the spirit to savor the evolution of the pairing. It's here that the superlative construction of the cigar shows its real value. The taper of the Perfecto shape down towards the head causes the cigar to mellow somewhat. Right at the point where other cigars would begin the inevitable turn towards a bitter finish, the palate remains fresh, allowing the herbal nuances noted earlier to show through. The cigar ash easily holds to well over an inch, and the burn is ring-straight throughout. The finish is cool and refined at 90+ minutes.



This transformation of flavors, though rarely possible to foresee in its entirety, is by no means an accident. It happens by careful observation, event study, of the character of the spirit and the cigar as constituent parts of a greater whole. The combination of the 100-proof spirit and the powerful cigar make for an adventurous pairing, a challenge to the novice, to be sure, but a delight for a more seasoned connoisseur, a rich reward for years of practice at the art of indulgence.

That being said, the sublime pleasure of such an experience is certainly not the sole province of experts in pairing and tasting. One need only taste a fine spirit, and sample a premium cigar, and allow the transformative process take shape. In the same way that one can enjoy a musical performance or appreciate the beauty of a painting without having studied the arts or their criticism, one need not be possessed of a broad vocabulary of flavors, nor a highly sophisticated palate to enjoy the fine arts of cigars and spirits. In truth, the only requisite requirement to enjoy these works of art is a capacity to experience the pleasure and satisfaction that can only be derived from such a pairing.

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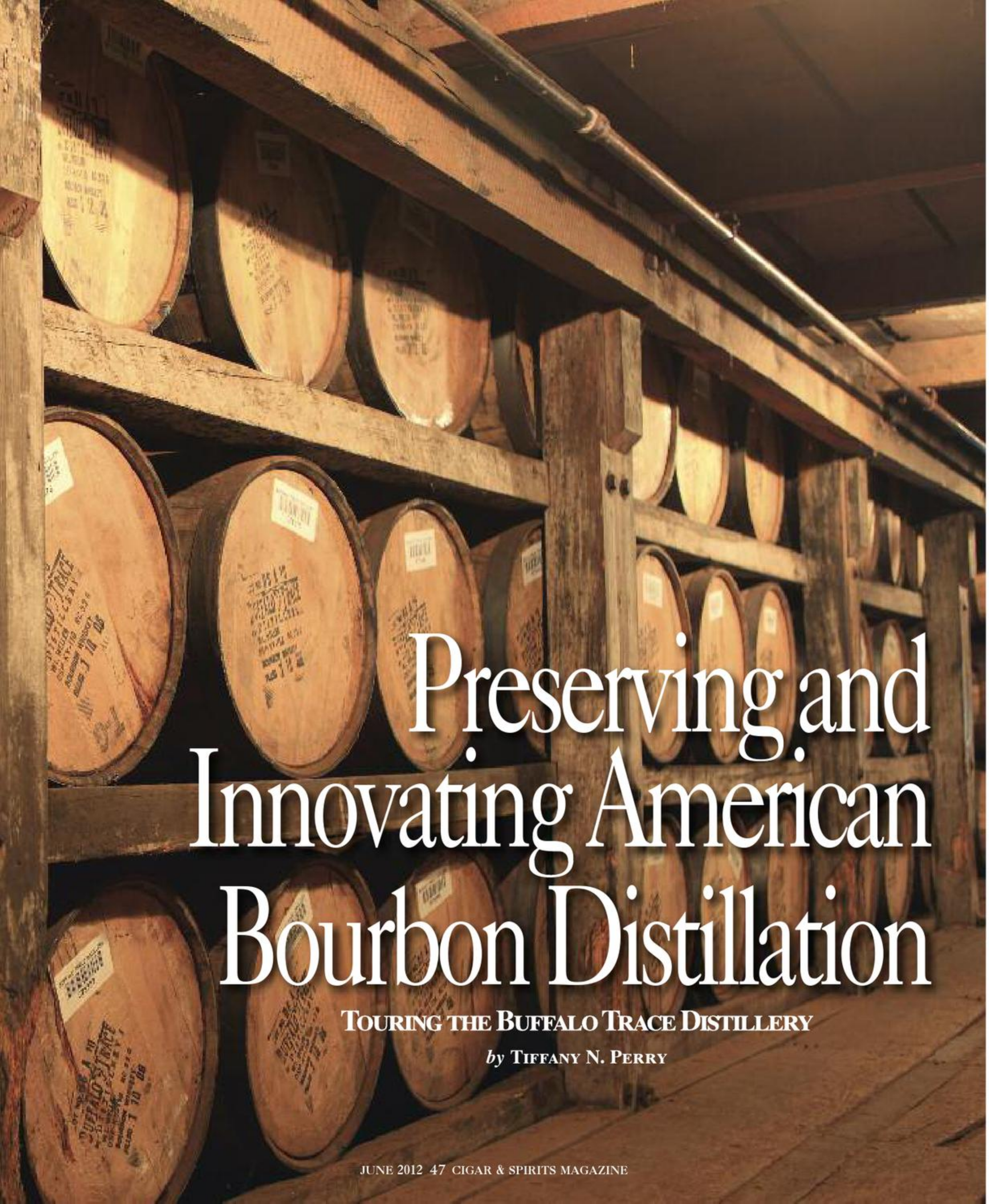
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Preserving and Innovating American Bourbon Distillation

TOURING THE BUFFALO TRACE DISTILLERY

by TIFFANY N. PERRY



Pappy Van Winkle, Elmer T. Lee, McDoodle... all sound like interesting company to celebrate New Year's Eve with, particularly if you have an affinity for bourbon. No, these are not characters from an 18th century story – those are some of the brews out of Buffalo Trace Distillery, an American bourbon label. A “trace” is the path created by roaming buffalo, which once traveled the Kentucky region in multitudes. Swinging through the “Unbridled Spirit” state, I reserved a spot on the Hard Hat Tour to learn about each step in the bourbon distillation process. This was my first-ever in-person tour of a bourbon distillery, and I thoroughly appreciated the experience.

There has been a functioning distillery on the Buffalo Trace grounds since 1787, though the first modern manifestation – as well as the first incorporation of steam-power – was constructed in 1857. E.H. Taylor, Jr., nephew of President Zachary Taylor, eventually purchased the distillery, and earned prestigious recognition for the high-quality whiskey produced by way of his numerous advancements, such as climate-controlled warehouses. At that time, his company was named Old Fire Copper Distillery, and shared the grounds with the Carlisle Distillery, attributed to George T. Stagg. The OFC Distillery was provided one of only four permits to continue production during the Prohibition Era, when the company manufactured alcoholic products for medicinal purposes and only available to those with a doctor's prescription. Celebrated master distillers Colonel

Albert Bacon Blanton and Elmer T. Lee followed Taylor in governing the distillery's continued operation, which was renamed Buffalo Trace in 1999.

Many bourbon fans are likely aware of the procedures in the distillation process, but for the casual enthusiasts, who are new to enjoying this all-American concoction, here is the basic procedure: According to the standards set by the U.S. Congress, a bourbon must be derived from at least 51 percent corn, aged in only new charred oak barrels, distilled to no more than 160 proof, enter the barrel at no more than 125 proof, and must be aged at least two years with no added coloring, flavoring, or additional spirits in order to retain the label of “straight” bourbon.

To clarify, distilling entails evaporating the liquid into steam following fermentation, and then recollecting the steam as it is condensed back into a liquid. Buffalo Trace currently has 320 barrels aging on the premises, in which a “number four” char is used to caramelize the wood for these barrels. This actually contributes a large percentage of the whiskey's flavor. In order to reach the aging point, the mash recipe must be mixed and cooked. Utilizing the requisite 51 percent corn, the recipes then integrate a mix of rye or wheat, and barley. Each load of corn is tested for moisture content, fungus, cracks, and any other potentially negative attributes to ensure the highest quality of ingredients enter production. The mash, which is the mix of all the ingredients in their rawest form, is then placed

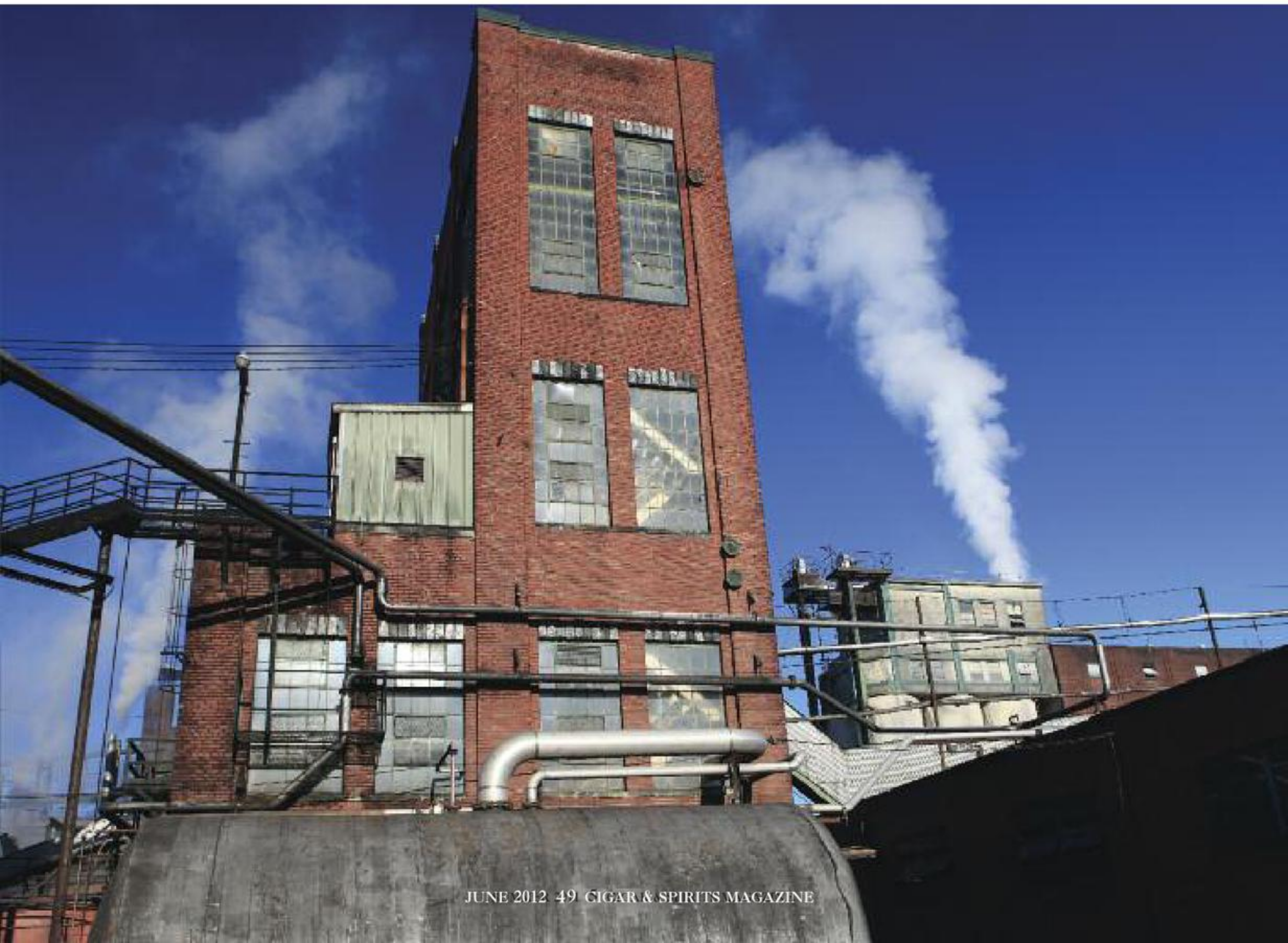
in very large cookers and subsequently cooled, before the yeast is added. Approximately 66 pounds of yeast are added for every 92,000 gallons.

There are ten fermenters onsite, each roughly three stories high! That's a lot of whiskey. The patented yeast strain used is the only ingredient used by Buffalo Trace that is not domestically produced. The yeast is created in bulk by those masters of all-things-brewed, shipped in from Belgium. The fermentation process lasts five days, then the vats are transitioned to the distillers, and the brew is finally put into the charred white oak barrels to age. Once bottled, aging is considered complete.

A half an hour drive outside of Lexington, Kentucky, Buffalo Trace holds claim to being one of America's oldest continually operating distilleries. Fortunately, my GPS selected a path along US-60 West, providing a serene, scenic drive with sights of Kentucky's famous horses, and some cattle mixed in, dotting along a backdrop of rolling pastures. Once inside the visitors center, and checked in for the reservation-only tour, a small group formed around the guide, Fred Mozenter. He has been working with Buffalo Trace for a number of years, providing an extensive knowledge of the distillery's long history. Sadly, the actual Still House was closed due

to construction and repair, although this was the only missing component from our tour that day.

As we walked to the first stop on our tour, the Mash House, we passed a lovely log clubhouse. This site can be rented for meetings, banquets, and has even been used for wedding receptions. Upon reaching our first destination, the group funneled into the building, where we were confronted by three hulking Mash Cookers with a capacity of approximately 10,000 gallons each. Fred led us up to the second floor in order to venture across a walkway to the fermentation building. The enormous fermenters adhere to the grand old tradition of proper American bourbon distillation. They are mostly comprised of copper, but the top third of the vats are covered in stainless steel to better augment the top level of fermentation, and prevent rusting. The tour is certainly interactive, as the guide encouraged us to sample from the fermenters at different stages, with the vat closest to completion being a drink not far off from beer. A slight, but distinct flavor exists between the early and late stages of fermentation. Normally, the tour would progress through the Still House, but we filed outside to end our tour in a grain storage facility. The remaining grains are dried out and redistributed to local farmers and wildlife services, to feed livestock and fish, creating a generally "green" process that reduces waste.





The Hard Hat Tour lasted an hour, though may have run a bit longer if the Still House was open. The group circled its way back to the Visitor Center to conclude the experience with a short tasting. It was then that we were presented with sampling options from White Dog, Buffalo Trace, Eagle Rare, and Rain. Unfortunately, due to Kentucky law, each person is only allowed to have two samples out of the four choices offered. Fortunately, I know enough about bourbon to understand the drink is not meant for quick shots, but to savor in luxurious sips. Our guide Fred made a brief quip of the too many near-heart attacks experienced by past tour members who simply threw back the samples like shots. The spirit should be enjoyed slowly, rolling the flavor along the tongue.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover that this bourbon distillery also

makes vodka, definitely a nice added touch. Rain is certified organic vodka that is distilled seven times. I chose to try Rain and Buffalo Trace, their flagship bourbon. The vodka, which won the Double Gold Medal in the San Francisco World Spirits Championship, has a light and somewhat fruity scent. It has a gentle, though full, flavor, and struck me as having the barest hint of vanilla. The multiple distillations are likely the reason for its silky taste. I found the Buffalo Trace bourbon to be smooth as well, even to the less acquired bourbon drinker like myself. Typically noted as good for mixing, this 90-proof whiskey also won a Double Gold Medal in 2009. I caught a tart, almost spicy scent from the sample. The Eagle Rare is a single barrel concoction, which has earned Double Gold Medals for five years in a row. The scent was heavier and more robust than the Buffalo Trace.

If you are unsure whether to bring the younger family members on the tour, the guide kindly provided some delicious Dr. McGillicuddy's Root Beer for the underage crowd. The historical information and gargantuan facilities are also interesting for all ages. Plus, Buffalo Trace has branched out into the chocolatier industry for locally produced bourbon candy, which is entirely G-rated for the kiddies and available to sample.

Fred the tour guide also described a fascinating experiment carried out by Buffalo Trace. Since whiskey flavor is heavily influenced by the barrel's wood, the distillery developed the Single Oak Project, in which 96 Ozark white oak trees were inspected and hand-selected by Buffalo Trace staff. Each tree was divided, and a barrel was crafted from the top and bottom portions of the tree. This produced 192 barrels, which were each uniquely charred, then filled with altered mash recipes and entry proofs. Finally, the barrels were stored in different locations, on varying levels, so that every barrel had at least one aspect unlike the others. Over the next four

years, 12 bourbons will be released every quarter, and these bottles will have a specific barrel number. When purchased, Buffalo Trace hopes that participants will complete a survey on the bottle to discern how these elements have affected the distillation journey. Whiskey connoisseurs will surely find this to be an intriguing endeavor, and can find more information, as well as join, at www.singleoakproject.com.

I greatly enjoyed my visit to the Buffalo Trace Distillery, and believe even the most hesitant fan of the drink should go with family and friends. For the blue-blooded enthusiast, it's certainly a must-see establishment for authentic American bourbon. As one of America's oldest functioning distilleries, there is a great deal of fascinating history, and a nicely informative explanation of the distillation process. The grounds are well-kept and very pleasant, and the staff is extremely friendly, full of the famous Southern hospitality. Find more information, including details on the various tour options, at <http://www.buffalotrace.com>.





THE Mint Julep

**A KENTUCKY DERBY
TRADITION IN A GLASS**

by J. MARSHALL SENKARIK

The Kentucky Derby on May 5th this year is the quintessential occasion for enjoying the Mint Julep. For many, this just means the one time during the year they watch horseracing, but for those of us in the know, it means seersucker suits, elegant women in ostentatious hats, white bucks, derby parties, bow ties, and of course, the ubiquitous mint julep.

The uninformed may think of the mint julep as somewhat of a girly drink – and to be honest, the name does little to dissuade this idea. Something minty is rarely masculine, and a julep sounds more like a flower than a drink that is basically straight whiskey. But a mint julep is not something to be taken lightly. It is sipped and savored for good reason, and for those unaccustomed to the chewy, sweet bite of bourbon, it can be a bit harsh if not made properly.

This southern libation has been a tradition at the Kentucky Derby for nearly a century. According to official material from the Derby, close to 120,000 mint juleps are served over the two day event each year! As you can imagine, that

mint julep, the flavor of the bourbon is front and center – in fact, it is the primary taste. Don't skimp here. Maker's Mark is an excellent choice, and runs about \$26 for a 750ml bottle, which certainly won't break the bank compared to some other spirits. This is my flagship bourbon, both straight, and in mixed drinks, but you can't go wrong with a higher end Woodford Reserve, or even a Knob Creek. The official whiskey used for the Kentucky Derby Mint Julep is Early Times Kentucky Whisky, which oddly, is not officially considered bourbon.

Many people have their own methods of making simple syrup, and if you do, then by all means proceed. If, however, you are new to this southern tradition, you will need equal parts purified water and granulated sugar. I will often use a cup of each to have some ready for whatever drinks the afternoon may bring my way. Combine the two in a saucepan and

stir over medium heat until the sugar is completely dissolved. Keep stirring, so as to not burn the sugar. You should mix in some of the mint sprigs as the syrup cooks in order to infuse the flavors, creating a mint flavored simple syrup.

There are different schools of thought when mixing the bourbon and simple syrup. Some go the distance and mix everything in a bowl and then let the flavors "meld" overnight. For many, this provides no instant gratification, and really would only be helpful if you plan on hosting a party the next day. It is always a good idea to prepare the simple syrup before hand, so that you don't turn making a drink into a 20 minute production. As for mixing, first fill the julep cup with crushed ice then add 3 ounces of bourbon. Next, add in 1 ounce of the mint simple syrup and briskly stir the contents. Finally, garnish with a mint sprig.

As with any good social drink, presentation is key. We've already established using a silver julep cup, but a sprig of mint firmly planted in the crushed ice serves a double duty. Yes, it looks mighty impressive, but it also forces the drinker to take a big whiff of mint every time they take a sip. Some recipes call for a short straw, and it is always nice to have the option, but the point is to make sure you get the mint aroma as you take each sip.

The mint julep evokes southern tradition and hospitality at its finest, and is a great drink for sipping in the heat of the afternoon. Whether you're at a derby party, the front porch of your plantation home, or just lounging by the pool, the mint julep is a classic option for any summer occasion. So whether or not you missed the Kentucky Derby this year, consider giving this refreshingly minty-sweet whiskey drink a try.



requires quite a bit of bourbon. All that being said, reader be warned, a mint julep is not for the faint of heart. Here is the basic recipe for a single serving:

3 oz. Bourbon
1 oz. simple syrup (1 cup water, 1 cup sugar)
2 sprigs fresh mint
Shaved or crushed ice

And that's it. Surprised? Most people not familiar with this drink are. That is all there is to it. Deceptively simple to make, but utterly sophisticated in presentation. There is, however, an art to preparing it.

To start, you will need an appropriate vessel. I use silver julep cups, crafted specifically for this purpose. Pewter works just as well, though without the flash. You could just as easily use an old fashioned or highball glass, which is appropriate for a bourbon drink.

The bourbon itself is the most important part. Conventional wisdom will tell you that you don't need a top shelf liquor for a mixed drink, but in a

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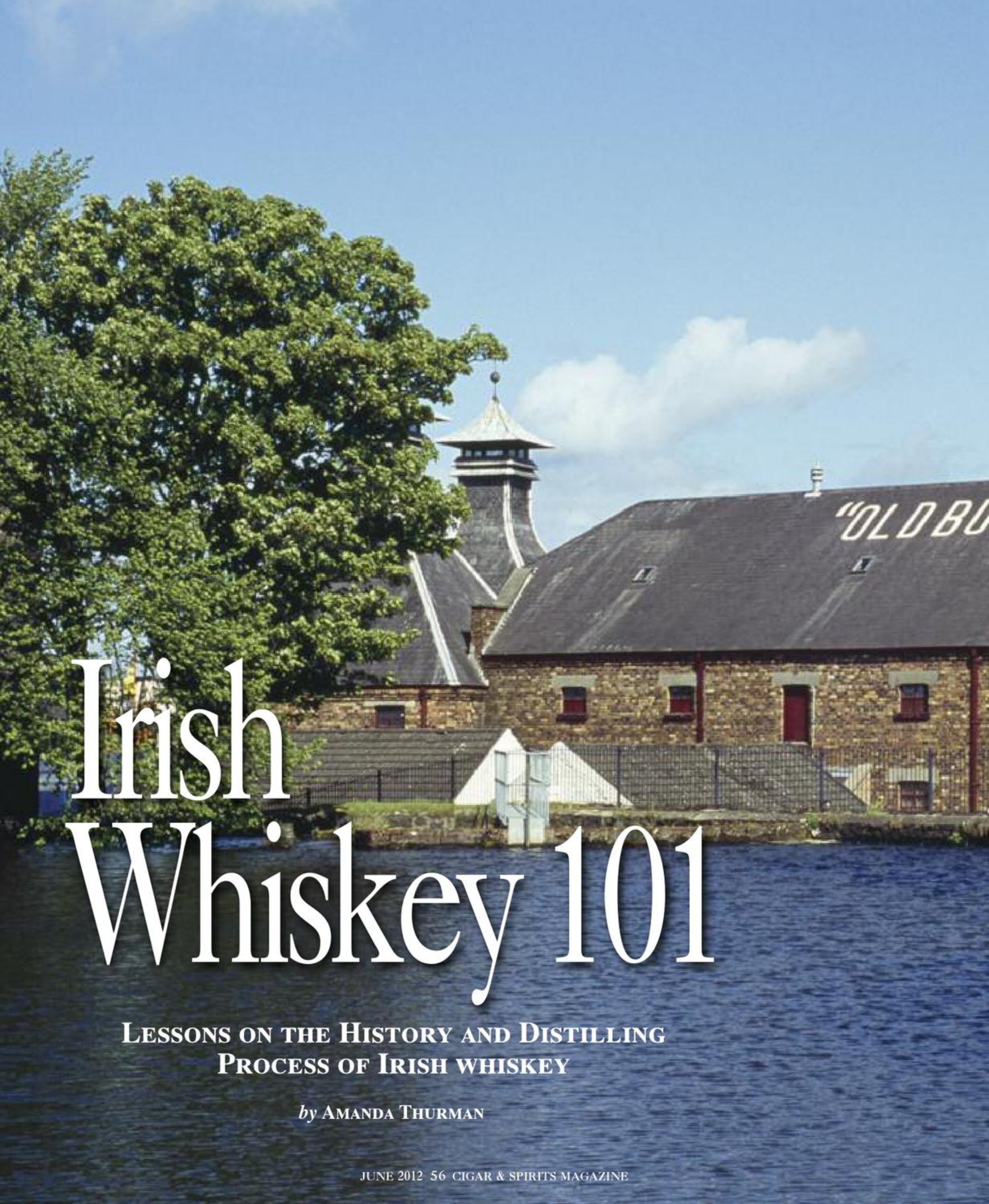
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Irish Whiskey 101

LESSONS ON THE HISTORY AND DISTILLING
PROCESS OF IRISH WHISKEY

by AMANDA THURMAN



INTERESTING HISTORICAL INSIGHTS:

Sipping on a glass of Irish whiskey is like sipping on liquid history, for Irish whiskey is said to be the “original” whiskey; though I’m sure the Scottish would argue this point, we get the fact that it’s old. Produced by Irish monks, the whiskey was initially clear in color and used for medicinal purposes. There was believed to be very little that whiskey could not cure, giving it the name *Uisce beatha*, which translated from the Gaelic language means “water of life.” Due to the magical mind and body healing qualities of Irish whiskey, which some would argue still exist today, it quickly became the unofficial national drink by the seventh century. It has even been reported that Irish whiskey was Queen Elizabeth’s favorite alcoholic spirit.

Despite its instant popularity, the Irish whiskey industry hit some hard times, starting with the introduction of a whiskey tax in the seventh century, which put many private distillers out of business. Since then, high taxes, strict government regulations, instability in the Irish fight for independence, and America’s prohibition have all been major setbacks. Not to mention the reluctance of Irish distilleries to use the newly invented Coffey Still, which hurt the Irish whiskey industry badly, allowing Scotch to dominate the market for years.

Although the number of whiskey distilleries greatly reduced in number due to mergers, and the lack of private distillers’ capability to stay in business, some of the larger companies were able to wait out the storm until times improved. What used to be a booming whiskey producing country was left with four surviving distilleries, New Midleton, Old Bushmills, Cooley, and Kilbeggan. There are also a few independently owned Irish whiskey brands, such as Tullamore Dew and The Irishman, but they are actually distilled at the bigger distilleries. Despite being out-numbered by Scotland in production capacity, Irish whiskey has made an amazing comeback in the worldwide market, and is still considered by some as the finest whiskey in the world.



SO WHAT MAKES IRISH WHISKEY UNIQUE?

Irish whiskey is made up of three basic ingredients: water, barley and yeast. Like many region-specific spirits, the making of Irish whiskey must adhere to certain regulations in order to be granted with the title of Irish whiskey. The rules, according to the Irish Whiskey Act of 1980, are really quite simple as compared to Scotch or Bourbon. The first requirement, quite obviously, is that the whiskey must be distilled and aged in the Republic of Ireland or in Northern Ireland. Secondly, the whiskey must be yeast-fermented and distilled to an alcohol by volume level of less than 94.8%. Lastly, Irish whiskey must be aged for a minimum of three years in wooden casks.

The most common types of whiskey are single malt, single grain, and blended, but the varying techniques used to make the product are what really make Irish whiskey distinct. Unlike Scotch, which is distilled twice, or Bourbon which is distilled once, Irish whiskey is distilled three times. This triple distillation gives Irish whiskey its familiar smooth finish. What also contributes to Irish whiskey's notable smoothness is the mix of sprouted barley, dried in closed kiln with unmalted barley.

UNDERSTANDING IRISH WHISKEY

Reading the label on a bottle of Irish whiskey can be quite confusing. To help imbibers better understand and appreciate what they are consuming, here is a little break down. Most Irish whiskey sold today is blended, such as the popular brand Jameson. Blended whiskey is a mixture of grain whiskey, malt whiskey, or pure pot still whiskey, from different distilleries. Using the pure pot still, traditionally made of copper, was the original way the Irish made their whiskey. Blended whiskeys weren't even produced until the Coffey still was invented in 1826. Although pot still whiskey is the original Irish whiskey, it is rarer today.

Grain whiskey, made in the Coffey still, is more economical to produce and has a lighter taste than pure pot still or malt whiskey. Though grain whiskey is typically blended with malt or pure pot





still whiskey, there is one Irish pure grain whiskey out on the market, Greenore, produced at the Cooley Distillery.

Malt whiskey is produced using malted grains, or grains that were allowed to fully germinate. Malt whiskey can be produced as either malt only or blended with grain whiskey. Whiskey is called “single malt” if it is an unblended malt whiskey made at a single distillery.

Pure pot still whiskey isn’t only describing the type of still used to produce the whiskey, but it also means that it was made using unmalted grains. This type of whiskey is uniquely Irish because other whiskeys from around the world use only malted barley. That being said, there is one distillery that produces pure pot still whiskey. Despite Cooley Distillery using the term pot still on their label, Middleton Distillery is the only distillery that uses the true method. Although mostly used in their blends, there are two whiskeys that are solely pure pot still: Green Spot and Redbreast.

The number of the cask used to age the whiskey is usually printed on the label. Typically the wood used in Irish whiskey is either from casks previously used for Bourbon or Sherry aging. It will be noted on the label if the whiskey was aged in a single cask, as many whiskeys are aged in a mix of wood barrels to aid in complex flavors. For example, the Bushmills 16 year old malt is aged in a combination of Oloroso Sherry and Bourbon seasoned casks, before maturing for months in port wine barrels. In addition to the cask number, the age, distillation date, and bottling date, will be printed on the label.

Reading a label of Irish whiskey may look intimidating for some, but with these little pointers it should be easier to know exactly what’s inside the bottle. Hopefully with this information, you will be able to better sip and savor Irish whiskey slowly, the way it’s meant to be enjoyed. As some of the oldest and finest whiskey around, Irish whiskey should be appreciated for its history, for its traditional process of production, for the many years it takes to reach your glass, and of course, for its great taste.

FEATURED SHOT

Irish Flag

BECOMING MORE THAN
A NATIONAL SYMBOL

by TIFFANY N. PERRY



Typically, whiskey is not my top choice in liquor selections, but I wondered what drinks I could find which incorporated Irish whiskey while still appealing to an infrequent whiskey drinker. My search uncovered what can possibly be considered the most “patriotic” use of this spirit, the Irish Flag.

This is a layered shot which, as indicated by the name, mimics the stripes of Ireland’s flag. Only three ingredients are necessary for this simple and eye-catching shot: green crème de menthe, cream liqueur such as Bailey’s Irish Cream (or, if you can locate a bottle outside of Kentucky, Buffalo Trace Bourbon Cream Liqueur), and an orange-colored liqueur like Grand Marnier or Butterscotch Schnapps, combined in that order. Each of these will measure to one-third proportions of the glass you select, a clear glass of course! Some mixologists recommend gently pouring the cream and orange liqueurs over the back of a bar spoon to maintain the individual layers. Utilizing an elongated glass will help emphasize the visual appeal.

The modern Irish flag, nationally adopted in 1919, indicates that the green stripe represents the nation’s Gaelic tradition, and also embodies Irish republicanism. The orange acknowledges the followers of King

William III of the House of Orange, in which the Orange Institution (or Orange Order) stands as a Protestant organization, primarily based in Northern Ireland. Interestingly, some international communities purposely misrepresent the orange stripe as gold or yellow because of the implied support for the Orange Order, and thus the Protestant agenda. Standing as a bridge of peace, or at least a truce, between them is the white stripe. Regardless of personal political beliefs, the flag serves as a clear reminder that this nation continually strives for cohesion and unity amongst its populous, in spite of its tumultuous history. Hopefully you can use these facts to, at least mildly, impress your friends, though I suggest relating the history early in your celebrations to avoid muddling the details.

In terms of the Irish Flag shooter, the typical liqueurs can be somewhat saccharine. Substituting the orange liqueur for an actual Irish whiskey may be preferable for imbibers that do not have a tendency to order sweeter mixes. I certainly enjoyed the minty burst of flavor with either version.

With St. Patrick’s Day not far out of memory, you may have to save this trivia nugget for next year’s celebrations, or you can simply astonish your friends with this vibrant libation, and a side of historical reference.

Recipes

Irish Flag

- 1/3 oz green crème de menthe
- 1/3 oz Irish cream
- 1/3 oz Grand Marnier orange liqueur
(some use Butterscotch Schnapps, Irish whiskey, or brandy)

DIRECTIONS:

Pour the crème de menthe as the bottom layer, and float the cream liqueur, followed by the orange liqueur (or preferred spirit). It is suggested to incorporate a bar spoon for ideal distinction between liquids.



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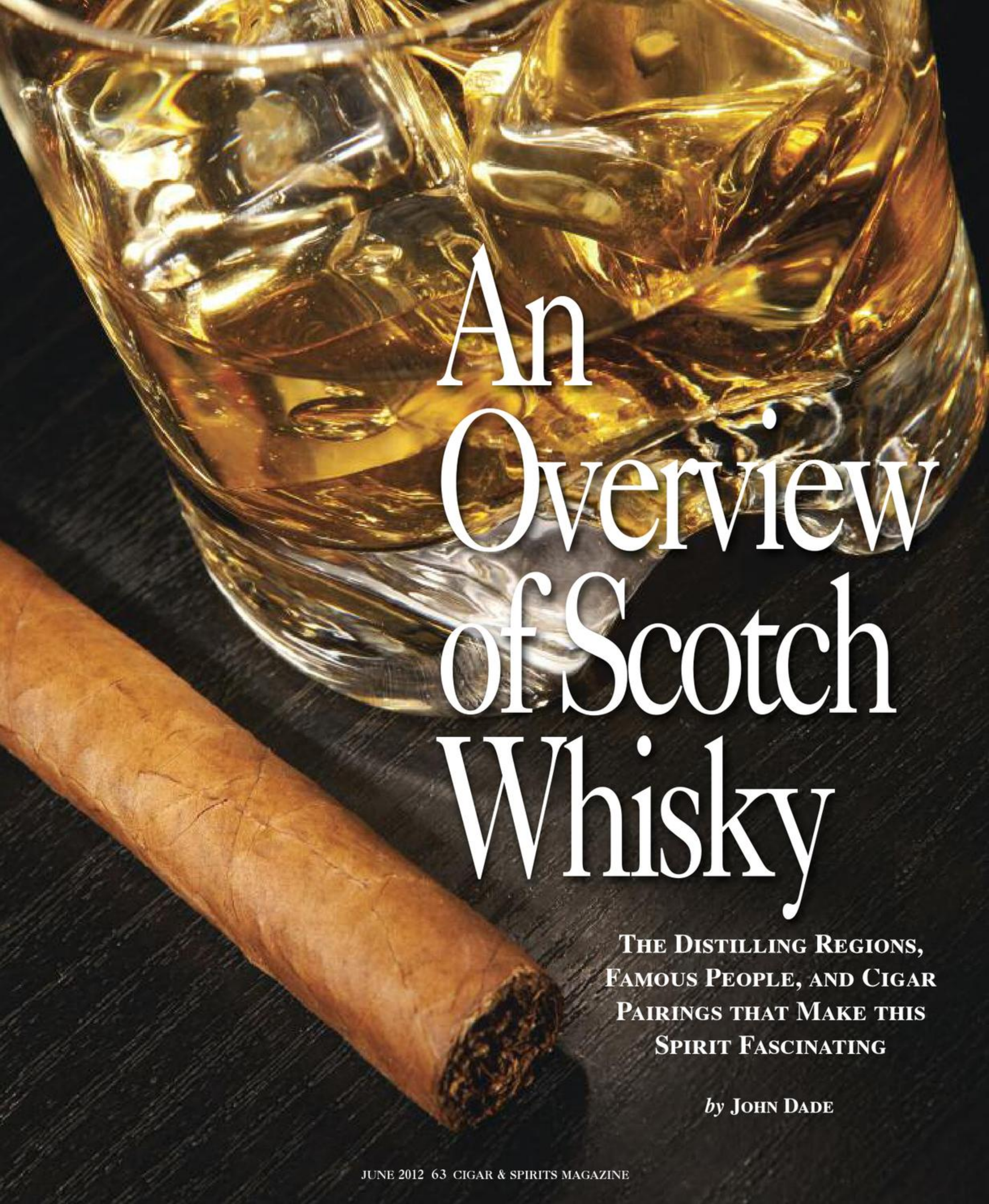
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A close-up photograph of a glass filled with whisky and ice cubes, resting on a dark wooden surface. A cigar lies diagonally across the foreground. The title text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

An Overview of Scotch Whisky

THE DISTILLING REGIONS,
FAMOUS PEOPLE, AND CIGAR
PAIRINGS THAT MAKE THIS
SPIRIT FASCINATING

by JOHN DADE



The Ardbeg Distillery is located in the Islay Region; Ardbeg is a very "peaty" Scotch

Although I usually write about offering alternative investment advice to individuals, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to write about one of my passions – Scotch. In fact, it took a little convincing on my part, when one day I decided to try an impromptu meeting with the Publisher and the Editor-in-Chief of Cigar & Spirits. Well, as you may have guessed by now, it worked! I was able to convince them to let me depart from my normal investment writings, and to instead cover this noble spirit.

When someone mentions the word "Scotch," my eyes get wide, my taste buds start to tingle, and I am reminded of the fantastic aromas and flavors that define the spirit. I can instantly take myself back to a moment shared with great friends- a stress free moment in life. Scotch is by far my favorite spirit. The great history, the fascinating process by which it's made, and the handcrafted care that goes into each and every bottle, are truly appealing. Just simply to think that it can easily take 12 to 18, or many more, years for a single drop to reach my glass, is nothing short of amazing!

Scotch, like cigars, and yes even investment strategies, all share in common the core fact that individuals have subjective preferences. While Scotch, in my experience, varies as widely in taste and personality as any spirit I have encountered, the preferences held by enthusiasts of this noble spirit are steadfast and can often run deep.

There is a fairly wide range of flavors and features in Scotch whisky. Whether it's smoky in flavor- or what is referred to as "peaty" in the world of whisky- spicy or tastes of caramel, there is a variety of influences that affect the taste. From blended Scotch, to single malts and single grain, each has its own distinct character and flavor profile.

Rather than delve too deeply into every aspect of the Scotch universe, let's touch briefly on some of the high points of this bold and historical spirit. Along the way, we'll discover the different regions that give Scotch its distinct flavors, Scotch's intermingling with the rich and famous throughout history, and some great pairing options with cigars.

DISTILLING REGIONS

Those with a bit of knowledge and a distinguishing palate can readily decipher a Scotch based on the regions of origin. First off, the word Scotch is used to define whisky that's made in Scotland, also notice the spelling of whisky, as opposed to Irish whiskey. Each region has particular characteristics that define the Scotches produced there.

Scotland is generally divided into five (some say six) Scotch distilling regions, and like fine wines, each is influenced by its region of distillation. These regions consist of: The Lowlands- known for their light bodied single malts; Islay- which is known for producing a more peaty, or smoky, and medicinal spirit, and is actually an island off the coast of Scotland; The Highlands- while not as peaty as the heavies from Islay, is more full bodied than the offerings from the Lowlands and tends to have some floral notes;



The Islands- while generally considered part of the Highlands Region, are actually a group of islands off the coast of Scotland (not including Islay), and possess their own unique styles, which some believe should be considered an official region of its own.

Next we have the Speyside region, which offers the most distilleries of any region, producing what many enthusiasts consider to be the most elegant, or smooth, of the Scotches produced. And the last region, Campbeltown, is the sixth region with its own iconic “dark and ominous” whiskies, Springbank being the most widely acclaimed. As noted by the distiller of Springbank, the 15 year old is a truly classic, best enjoyed after dinner, or with your favorite cigar.

FAMOUS SCOTCH DRINKERS

Scotch enjoys a long record of being the chosen spirit of many great and influential people throughout history. Some of those said to favor a good Scotch, comprise many U.S. Presidents including William McKinley, William H. Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy, Jr. (though not until after 4pm), and Richard Nixon. Surely there were still other Presidents who occasionally sipped

the spirit. In the case of George Washington, he was one of the largest producers of whiskey at Mt. Vernon, just not Scotch. Another famous leader, Sir Winston Churchill, who in addition to his 10 cigars per day, was known to be a great fan of single malt Scotch.

In the entertainment industry, there are a number of celebrities going back decades who have been known to quaff a bit now and then. Some famous examples include George Burns, WC Fields, Dean Martin, and more recently, Sean Connery and Adrien Brody. Of course we wouldn't want to leave Charlie Sheen off the list, who recently sipped The Macallan '57 which goes for around \$15,000 a bottle.

And of course, let's not forget that famous duo from the TV series Boston Legal, William Shatner and James Spader, who ended every episode with a dram or so of Scotch and a big cigar. A testament to the high esteem this “end of the day” ritual holds among the powerful and wealthy, at least in popular culture.

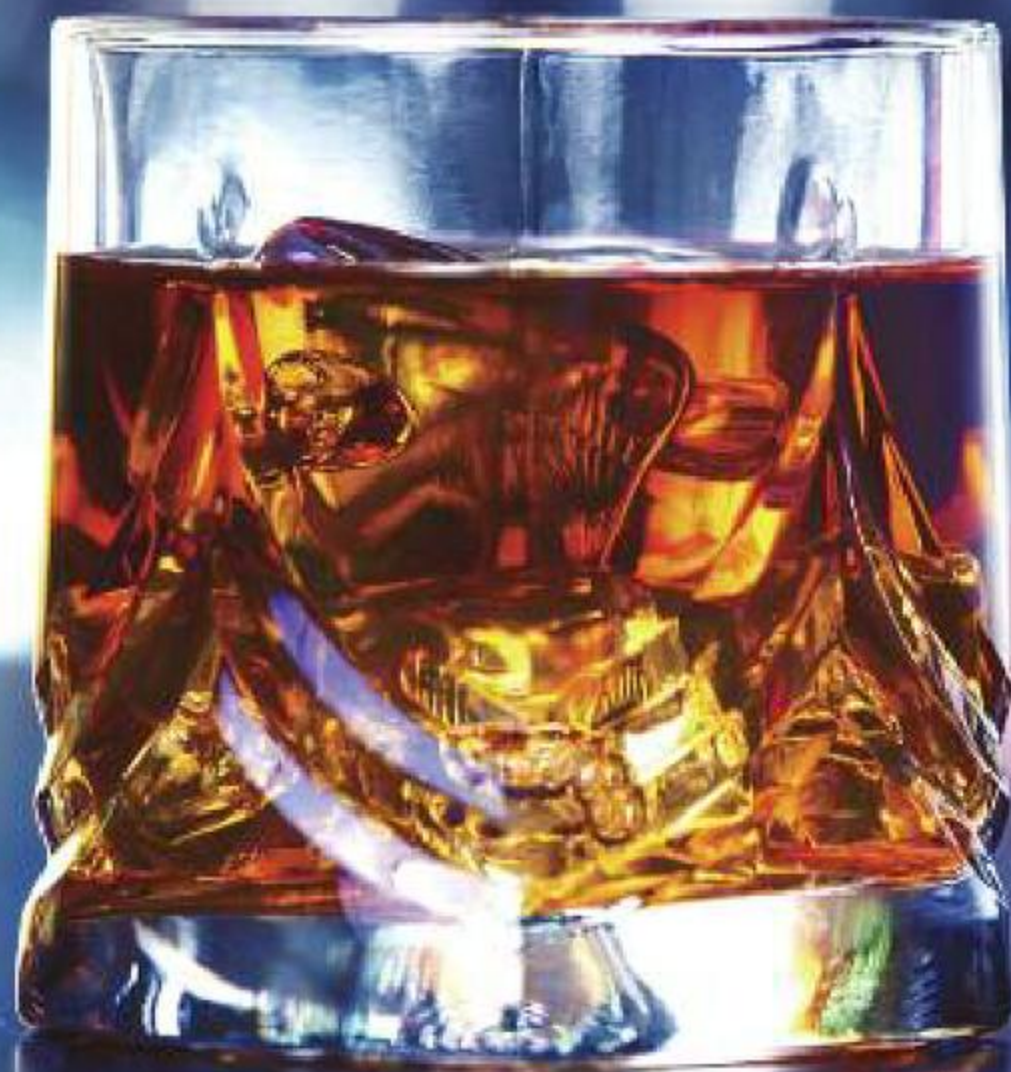
The enjoyment of Scotch can also often be found among big money Wall Street types and their big business and financial counterparts. Nowhere was this more noted than perhaps at the huge charity fundraiser held in April of 2011 for Michael Milken's Prostate Cancer Foundation. At this event, the likes of Bill Gross- who is the founder of the massive investment firm PIMCO- and other moguls including Keith Frankel (Vitaquest) and David Pecker (National Enquirer), were among those hundreds of attendees bidding on a trip to Scotland's Glenmorangie House Distillery. The trip included a round of golf at Royal Dornoch and a bottle of 28 year old single malt Glenmorangie Scotch. Frankel's \$28,000 bid took home the Scotch.

So with this stellar history and “A” list following, I am honored with the opportunity to share my humble opinions regarding this grand spirit. Being a single malt guy myself, I'll share with you three of my favorites:

As a side note, the question of how to drink Scotch has been raging since the first pour it seems. While some swear by adding a single cube of ice, still others opt for adding a bit of water or a spritz of soda to their glass. I personally take mine neat, with purified water on the side.

TASTING NOTES & CIGAR PAIRINGS

I'll start with my “special occasion” Scotch, my cherished Macallan (12 and 18 year) Sherry Oak from the Speyside distilling region. The 12 years



garners its rich golden amber color from its aging in hand crafted Spanish oak casks, previously used for sherry aging, and lavishes the palate with flavors of spice, orange-chocolate, dried fruit and a touch of caramel. Pairing this with an Alec Bradley Prensado makes for a rich and rewarding occasion fit for any celebration.

My choice for “professional” settings at the Gentlemen’s Club is the Glenmorangie Original, from the Highland distilling region. Its pale lemony color, citrus and floral overtones, with hints of peach and a nose of vanilla, seem to complement the deep leather and dark woods of the Club House at the end of the day. Paired with a nice Oliva Serie V, this combination makes the 19th hole even more of a welcome repose.

That brings me to my final selection - The Balvenie Double Wood 12 year, which is by no means the last choice. This Speyside whisky is my



“everyday” pour of choice. Not that I drink everyday mind you. . . Oh well that’s another story for another time!

The Balvenie is an excellent single malt that has a clear golden hue, and a distinctive character developed from maturing in two types of barrels. Being transferred from its initial American Oak Bourbon barrels into European Oak Sherry casks, gives this Scotch a nose and taste that sets it apart. The initial caramel and sherry flavors gives way to a nutty, cinnamon and spice on the palate, that finishes smooth and very satisfying. I fire up a Rocky Patel 15th Anniversary with this handsome pour to finish a good week on a high note.

Well I’ll wrap it up here. I’m getting damned thirsty and the siren song of

Scotch and stogies is beckoning me. You’ll have to try one of these pairings for yourself to discover all that they have to offer. So until next time, may the “water of life” be with you and your favorite puro. Cheers!

John Dade is the Founder of the Cigar Night Business Mixer Group, and a Managed Futures Specialist with Essex Futures.

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**Special thanks to the Scotch Whisky Association and their website for assistance in researching this article*

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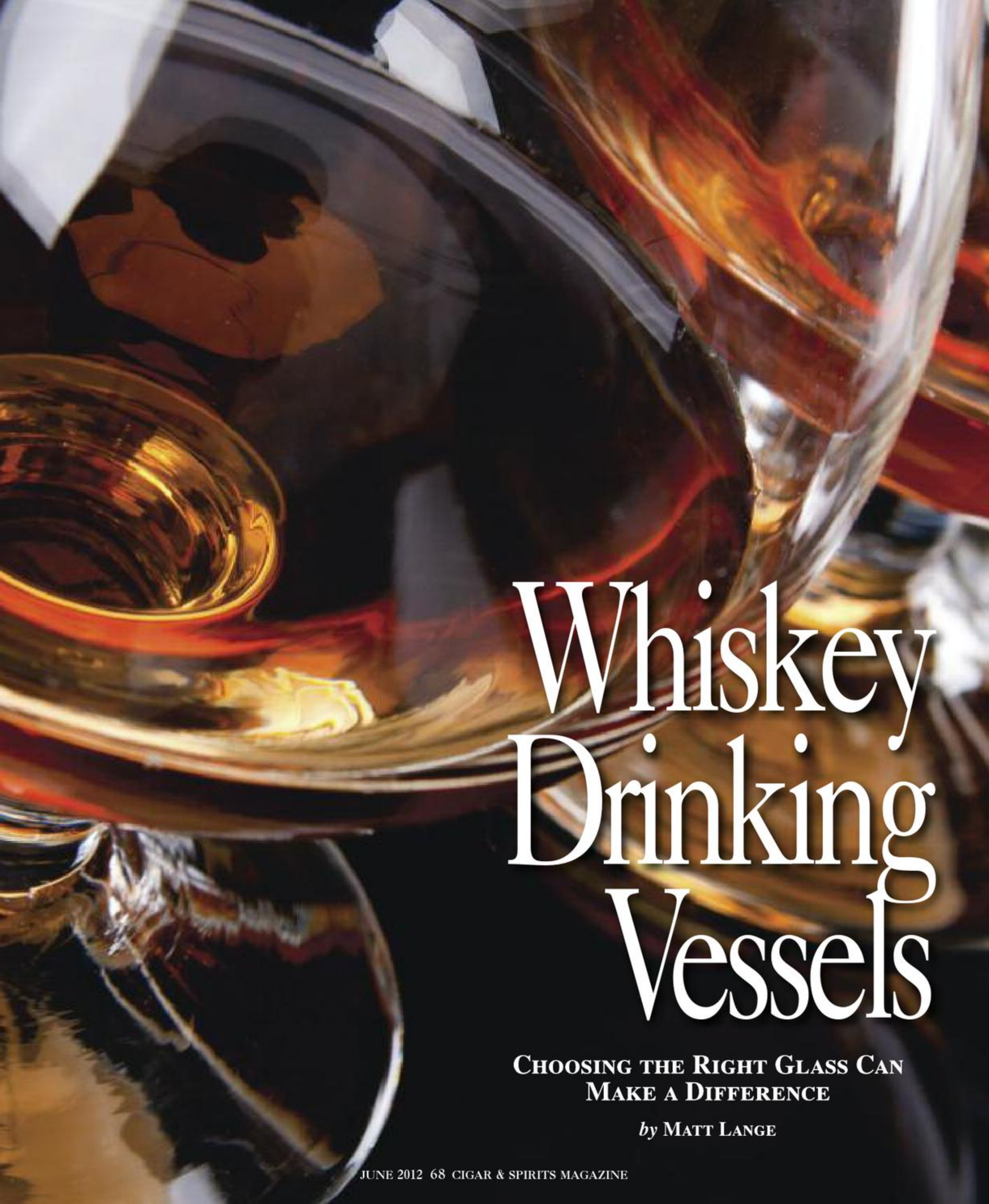
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Whiskey Drinking Vessels

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT GLASS CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

by MATT LANGE

So you are a serious whiskey drinker. You have accumulated a bit of a bottle collection. You know what makes Single Pot-Still Irish whiskey special, you know what the “angel’s share” is, and you know what makes Tennessee Whiskey different from Bourbon. But have you ever taken the time to really think about what type of glass you are drinking your whiskey from?

An often-overlooked aspect of whiskey appreciation, choosing the correct glassware, is more than just snobbery. The size and shape of a glass makes a huge difference in the perception of aroma, as glasses that taper at the top concentrate the aromas coming off of

a whiskey. Since much of what we perceive as taste actually results from our sense of smell, aroma has a huge impact on the enjoyment of a whiskey, whether or not you swirl and sniff before you sip. The shape of the glass also effects how you hold it, which can determine whether or not the heat of your hand alters the temperature of the spirit. These differences in shape and size can significantly alter the perception of taste. The Riedel Company, a pioneer in designing individualized glassware for specific wines and spirits, found through experimentation that wine connoisseurs could be fooled into thinking one wine was actually two different wines, simply by changing the glass.

With this in mind, let’s explore some of the most popular and interesting types of whiskey drinking vessels.



THE QUAICH

A quaich is a small, shallow, two handled bowl historically made from wood but now commonly made from silver or pewter. Originating with the clans of the Scottish Highlands, quaichs were used to offer guests a welcoming dram of whisky. Said to represent friendship and community, they are often given as gifts and are a popular favor at Scottish weddings.

As for drinking whiskey out of them, the quaich’s shallow bowl shape makes it a bit awkward and lets much of the aroma escape. Nowadays quaichs are predominantly ornamental, and while drinking from them is a good history lesson and passing one around is a fun communal experience, it is not the best choice for a go-to whiskey glass.



THE TUMBLER

Perhaps the most popular, and certainly the most straightforward whiskey glass, the tumbler is the generic name for a simple stout glass with a thick bottom and straight sides. In one form or another it was the standard liquor glass for most of the 20th century. This is the type of glass Don Draper has in his well-stocked office bar on *Mad Men*.

The tumbler is ideal for those who like their whiskey with ice, or for cocktails served on the rocks, such as an Old Fashioned. Certain tumblers are often called “Old Fashioned Glasses” for this reason. While this is a versatile glass, it does not have a narrow top to concentrate aromas, so you may want to look elsewhere for whiskeys you really want to savor.

THE SNIFTER

Also called a Brandy Snifter or Balloon, this is a short-stemmed glass with a wide, rounded bottom and a relatively narrow top. Snifters are often extremely large and are only partially filled. The large surface area on the bottom of the glass causes increased evaporation which, coupled with the narrower top, makes the snifter one of the best glasses for capturing the aroma of a spirit. The larger size of a snifter allows the drinker, if they so choose, to put their nose right into the glass as they are sipping a whiskey, causing the aroma to intensify the perception of taste as they are drinking.

The rounded bottom also allows the drinker to cup the glass with their hand, warming the spirit as they drink. Many brandy drinkers enjoy this effect, but if you prefer your whiskey room temperature or cooler, this may not be the glass for you.



THE COPITA

The Copita is a small, long-stemmed, tulip-shaped wine glass. Often used to drink sherry, these glasses narrow at the top more than larger, standard wine glasses. Versions of the copita, known as “nosing glasses,” are used by Scotch and Irish whiskey blenders to evaluate whiskey maturation and determine when a whiskey is ready to be blended or bottled. The narrow top, long stem, and slender shape, allows the blender to rapidly swirl the whiskey to release the aroma, making it ideal for evaluating a whiskey based on smell.

The long stem also allows a drinker to take their time sipping a whiskey without warming it. Though some may feel strange drinking whiskey from a small wine glass, the copita makes an excellent glass for enjoying quality whiskey.



THE GLENCAIRN GLASS

This glass was developed with the aid of master blenders in Scotland and designed to enhance the whiskey drinking experience while addressing perceived problems with other commonly used glassware. The glencairn glass has a sturdy, stemless base that tapers in before ballooning out with a round bottom to hold the spirit. The sides then curve in before straightening out toward the top. The idea is that the round bottom and narrow top will still capture aroma, but the straight sides make it easier to drink from than a copita nosing glass or snifter.

The glencairn glass is the first glass to be endorsed by Scotch Whiskey Association and it is used by nearly every whiskey company in Scotland and Ireland, as well as many in the US. For a quality whiskey, you can't go wrong drinking from a glencairn.

Thinking about these glasses shows how different they are and how they can affect a whiskey, but perhaps the most important factor is the ethereal personal preference. What feels right in your hand? What glass do you find the most aesthetically pleasing? Professional blenders might prefer the concentrated aromas of a snifter or copita, but if a tumbler feels better to you, use it. If you like to drink your bourbon out of a mason jar, don't let anyone tell you that you are wrong. Whatever enhances your whiskey drinking experience is the correct glass for you, but these guidelines can certainly help.



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Whiskey

SCOTCH, BOURBON, & IRISH WHISKEY

Whiskey is an often misunderstood spirit for the uninformed. Those that are not familiar with whiskey have probably taken a shot of it at one point or another, with burning throat and contorted face. That's the first major mistake. Whiskey is not at all meant to be taken as a shot! It is meant to be poured into a tumbler, snifter, copita, or Glencairn glass, and sipped deliberately. The aroma should be taken in through the nose, and a small sip tasted on the tongue, with just a small amount of the spirit lasting 15 to 20 minutes or more.

A spirit that can take anywhere from 4 or 5, to 18, 30, or even 50 years to make and age in barrels, requires slow enjoyment and appreciation. The experience itself can be elevated to an almost ceremonial stature depending on the age of the whiskey consumed. When you understand and appreciate what you're consuming, it can be intoxicating just to think of the process and history that went into it.

Whiskey comes in several various forms, each with its own specific process and guidelines for production, and each from different geographic locations around the world. In this issue, we cover 3 whiskeys: Scotch, Bourbon, and Irish Whiskey. Scotch Whisky (notice the lack of an "e") is whisky made exclusively at distilleries in Scotland, and is most commonly barrel aged for at least 12 years, and up to 50+ years. The flavor and characteristics of a specific Scotch will depend on the geographic distilling region in Scotland, the years it's been aged, the type of barrel used, whether it's peated or unpeated, and whether it's single malt, single grain, or blended. Scotch is commonly aged in former Sherry casks, Bordeaux casks, or Bourbon casks. It is the norm to drink Scotch straight, either neat (without ice), or on the rocks (with ice), rather than to include it in a mixed drink.

Bourbon is whiskey made exclusively in the United States, and most commonly in Kentucky. After distil-

lation, it must be aged in brand new charred oak barrels, and commonly for 4 to 8 years. Occasionally Bourbon is aged for 9, and even 18 years in the case of rare vintage productions. Bourbon can be enjoyed neat, on the rocks, or in a variety of intriguing mixed drinks. Some iconic Bourbon drinks include the Mint Julep, Old Fashioned, Whiskey Sour, Manhattan martini and others. Bourbon also goes great with dark or clear sodas.

Irish Whiskey, as you may have guessed, is whiskey made exclusively in Ireland. It must be aged for at least 3 years, and often comes in age statements of 10, 12, 16, or 21 years of maturity. As opposed to Scotch which is produced at many different distilleries throughout Scotland, Irish Whiskey is produced primarily at 4 Irish distilleries. As with Scotch and Bourbon, Irish Whiskey can be enjoyed neat or on the rocks. Like Bourbon, it is also perfectly acceptable to make mixed drinks with Irish Whiskey. Many are familiar with the Irish Coffee, or some mixed shot drinks like the Irish Car Bomb. Although whiskey should not be taken as a straight shot, you can find a loophole with the Irish mixed drink shot if necessary.

As you can see, there are quite a few variations to the different categories of whiskey. On the following pages, we feature some great choices from each of the 3 selected categories and at widely varying price points. You should note that there are also categories for Canadian Whiskey, Tennessee Whiskey, Rye Whiskey, Wheat Whiskey, and whiskey from countries all over the world, in addition to various flavored whiskeys, that aren't covered in this issue. We start with 3 of the most popular categories.

With a little knowledge and appreciation, your whiskey drinking experience can vastly improve. Let's also not forget that some of the best cigar and spirits pairings are achieved with whiskey. Hopefully you will learn something new, and gain a new understanding of this historical and iconic spirit.

IRISH WHISKY



KILBEGGAN BLENDED IRISH WHISKEY

Established in 1757, Kilbeggan has over 250 years of tradition blended into every bottle. Recipient of many industry awards including a gold medal at the 2012 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, Kilbeggan has a deep, rich gold color. Aromas of sweet Oloroso sherry oak and malt are apparent. This is a full, lush whiskey, with a smooth and creamy mouthfeel. A sweet caramel flavor mingles with malt and honey. With a strong, oak finish, this is a unique Irish blend for around \$25 a bottle. 40% abv.



**TYRCONNELL SINGLE MALT
IRISH WHISKEY**

An Irish single malt whiskey from the independent Cooley's Distillery, Tyrconnell has a distinctively fruity flavor. This award winning whiskey, taking Double Gold at the 2009 Great Taste, has a pale gold color with a full, fruity aroma of citrus and spice. There is a zesty orange flavor on the palate, with a heavy malt that blends well with the sweetness. There is a long finish, with lingering flavors of malt, fruit, and honey. A distinctive single malt in the range of \$30 a bottle. 40% abv.



**THE WILD GEESE IRISH SOLDIERS & HEROES LIMITED
EDITION IRISH WHISKEY**

Long name, even longer on taste. The light golden hue of this blended whiskey displays its crispness, but belies the strong, robust, and lingering flavors within. This limited edition Irish Whiskey has a full aroma of citrus and spice. Warming on the palate, the taste is complex, with a full, round body, and subtle hints of oak, honey, and even chocolate. The finish is sweet with a lingering honey flavor. A bottle of the Limited Edition goes for roughly \$70. 43% abv.

BOURBON



EVAN WILLIAMS 2001 SINGLE BARREL VINTAGE BOURBON

The list of awards that this classic American Bourbon has won goes on for a mile. This whiskey has a stiff, sweet aroma, with notes of oak and charred wood. The flavor is well balanced, round, lush, and fruity, with the chewy sweetness that has made Evan Williams such a beloved whiskey. The Vintage Single Barrel is smooth on the palate with a complexity and peppery spice that lingers. Aged in oak barrels starting in 2001, this mature bourbon retails for about \$25. 43.3% abv.

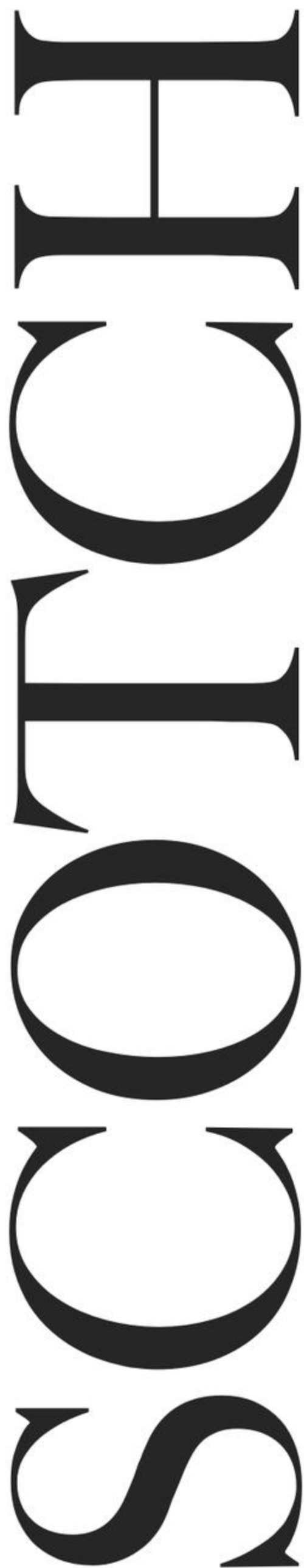
MAKER'S MARK BOURBON

Maker's Mark is one of the classic and most well-known Kentucky Bourbons. Aged between 5 to 8 years in charred white oak barrels, there is a strong caramel flavor present on the palate, with a touch of spice. Full bodied yet smooth, Maker's has developed a worthy reputation as a bourbon staple. A robust aroma of oak, caramel, and spice is present on the nose. The reputation is based on elegant taste and a high degree of quality, at around \$26 a bottle. 45% abv.



ELIJAH CRAIG 18-YEAR OLD SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

Elijah Craig 18-Year Old is proclaimed as the oldest Single Barrel Bourbon available in the world. It is very rare for bourbon to mature this long. The aroma begins with heavy floral notes with a fruity nose, which melds into deep honey. A smooth and light body with flavors of soft oak, honey, and rye fill each sip. The finish is toasty with sweet vanilla. This rare small batch bourbon is very affordable in the \$40 range. 45% abv.



Matured for a minimum of 18 years in Spanish sherry oak casks, the casks are specially handcrafted and sherry seasoned in Jerez, Spain. Distilled in the Speyside region of the Scottish Highlands, this quintessential single malt portrays an aroma of dried fruits, with hints of citrus, vanilla, and cinnamon. Rich flavors of fruit, spice, orange peel, and sherry wood intermingle on the palate. At around \$200 a bottle or less, it is exclusive yet still not completely out of range. 43% abv.

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**THE BALVENIE DOUBLE
WOOD 12-YEAR OLD SINGLE
MALT SCOTCH WHISKY**

This unique Speyside single malt Scotch has a distinct character that's provided by being aged in two different wood casks. During the final few months of the 12 year maturation period, the whisky is transferred from a traditional oak whisky cask to a first fill European oak sherry cask. This process helps to add to the depth of flavor, which includes a slight nutty sweetness combined with cinnamon and sherry. Exceptionally smooth with aromas of vanilla and honey, the finish is long and satisfying. This is a terrific Scotch at a virtually unbeatable price point of around \$40. 43% abv.

**GORDON & MACPHAIL -
STRATHISLA 1967 RARE
VINTAGE SINGLE MALT
SCOTCH WHISKY**

Distilled in 1967 and bottled in 2007, this is a rare 40 year-old single malt Scotch from the Strathisla-Glenlivet Distillery in the Speyside region. This dark amber whisky has flavors of sherry, with a combination of sweet raisin and mixed spices lingering on the palate. A fruity aroma is apparent in this medium to full bodied after dinner dram. This is a 40 year-old rare vintage that is surprisingly affordable given the age, in the \$200 price range. 43% abv.



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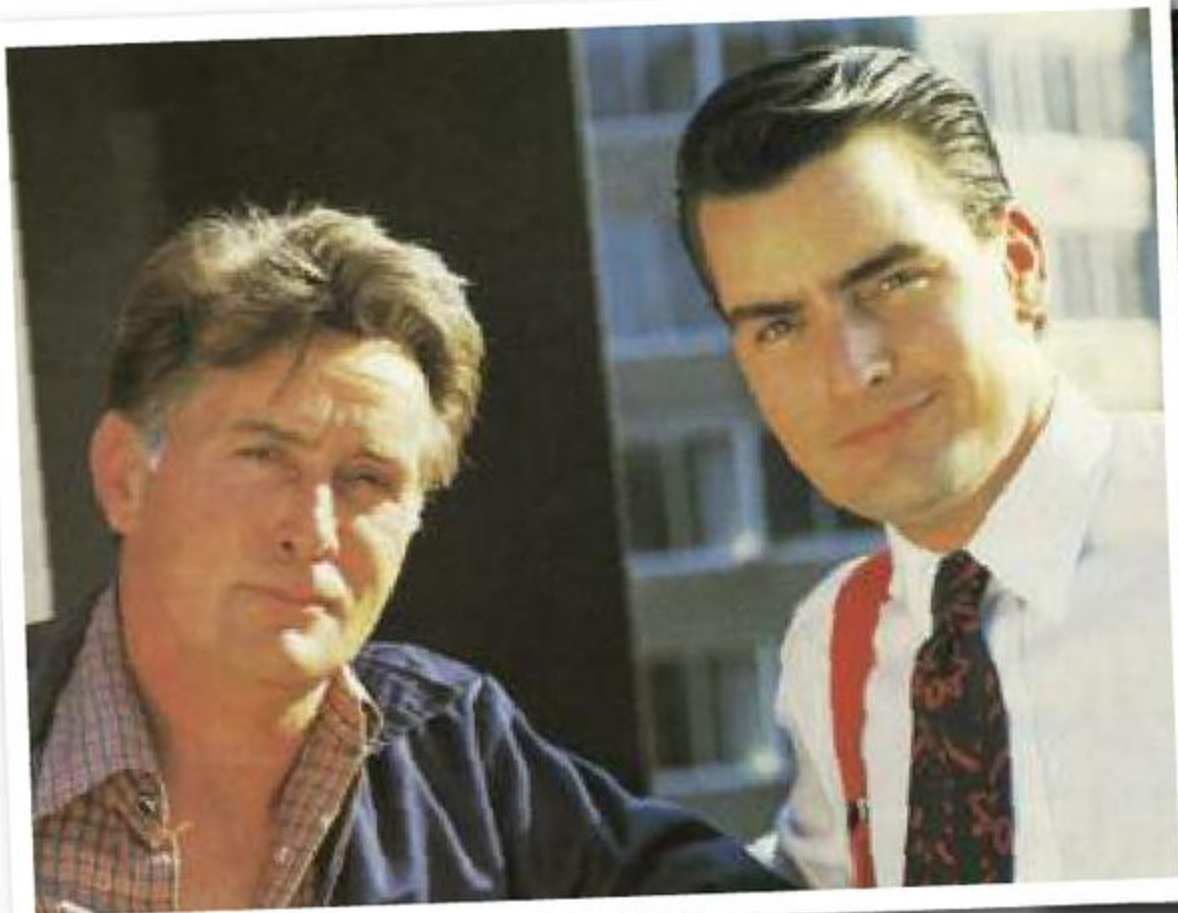
CHARLIE SHEEN

WITH FIRE IN HIS SOUL AND PASSION IN HIS BLOOD, THE MAN IS A TOTALLY BITCHIN' ROCKSTAR FROM MARS

by JON SHAKILL

I said it; Charlie Sheen is a totally bitchin' rockstar from Mars. His words not mine, but I'd have to agree. And no, the hilarious metaphor is not lost on me. Charlie is not an average man. The guy is funny- he's a comedian, and he can act. He's a movie star, TV star, and collector of the finest wrist watches in the world. He's the comeback king who's proven it time and time again, through all the ups and downs, and his relentless ability to reach the top after the occasional fall from grace. He's been the hero and the underdog, but has never given up. He's authentic and down to earth at his core, and isn't afraid to say it like it is, a real straight shooter. He holds two records in the Guinness Book of World Records; one for being the highest paid television actor of all time, and one for the fastest person to reach 1 million followers on Twitter (he now has nearly 7 million followers). He's also a cigar enthusiast with over 150 boxes of cigars, who enjoys the occasional glass of 57 year old Macallan Scotch. Charlie Sheen is a man's man.

Saying his name is itself capable of evoking a myriad of thoughts and emotions. Whether it is the bad boy image that's so often seen in the media, the fairly recent Two and a Half Men "departure," or just as likely, the fond memories of some of a generation's favorite blockbuster movies. It seems rarer in the modern discourse that a person *doesn't* have an opinion about Charlie Sheen. Whatever that opinion is, one thing is for sure— the man is by far one of the most successful actors of the last 25 years, and arguably one of the most successful actors of all time.



You may be asking yourself “how can Charlie Sheen be one of the most successful actors of all time?” Well right out of the gates in 1986, at the age of 21, the first major movie Sheen starred in, *Platoon*, won the Academy Award for Best Picture, as well as the Golden Globe for Best Drama, among other accolades. Readers may recognize the movie from the latest DirectTV commercial where Sheen does a brief comedic reenactment. The commercial marks the beginning of yet another comeback for Charlie, and underscores his ability as one of the few actors who’s reached the pinnacle of success in film, primetime television, and commercials.

Of course everybody remembers the classic financial movie *Wall Street*. The infamous Gordon Gekko played by Michael Douglas, teaches the fresh faced Bud Fox (Sheen) that “greed is good.” The movie, in which Gekko takes Fox under his wing in an insider trading scheme, is one of the quintessential depictions of corporate excess and financial fraud ever made. Charlie followed up the *Wall Street* epic with the 1988 blockbuster *Young Guns*, which opened at #1 at the Box Office. And who could forget bad boy reliever Ricky “Wild Thing” Vaughn, played by Sheen in the 1989 baseball comedy, *Major League*. In 1990, Sheen shared the big screen with Clint Eastwood in *The Rookie*; and in 1991, the comedy *Hot Shots!* debuted at #1, and grossed over \$180 million at the box office. In 1993, Sheen starred in two comedies: *Hot Shots! Part Deux*, which grossed over \$130 million, and *The Three Musketeers* which debuted at #1 at the Box Office. Winning?

In 1994, when he was just 29 years old, Charlie Sheen received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Between 1994 and 2004, despite facing various personal setbacks, Charlie starred or appeared in a wide range of feature films and TV shows. Although there are too many to list here, some of the highlights included *Major League II*, *Money Talks*, and *Scary Movie 3*. It was in 2001 that Charlie got his major television break, replacing Michael J. Fox as the star in the series *Spin City*. Just two years later, Sheen was cast as Charlie Harper in the primetime hit series *Two*

and a Half Men, which would become the #1 comedy on television. Prior to being released from the show in 2011, in a media frenzy no less, Charlie became the highest paid actor in the history of television, earning some \$2 million per episode. Winning!

Despite the public controversy surrounding the 2011 exit from *Two and a Half Men*, Charlie Sheen is back as strong as ever and ready to triumph yet again. Sheen stars in a brand new show called *Anger Management*, premiering on FX on Thursday, June 28th, 2012, at 9pm. The hilarious, if not ironic premise of the show, is Sheen starring as the character “Charlie,” a non-traditional therapist specializing in anger management. Having just finished filming the movie *A Glimpse Inside the Mind of Charles Swan III*, due out in 2013 and directed by Roman Coppola, Charlie is fighting his way back onto the top of the entertainment world. Interestingly, Roman Coppola’s father, Francis Ford Coppola, worked with Charlie’s father Martin Sheen on the 1979 classic, *Apocalypse Now*. According to Charlie, he has gone back to his roots with this movie, focusing on acting rather than the hype.

In the following interview, Lincoln Salazar and I sit down with Charlie Sheen, as well as his best friend, watch dealer, and social networking guru Bob Maron, as well as marketing guru Larry Solters. Bob Maron is the President of Robert Maron, Inc., which buys and sells some of the world’s most expensive and exclusive watches. Charlie and Bob have been the closest of friends for about 7 years now, sharing a passion for watches. Larry Solters, head of Scoop Marketing, is a behind the scenes operator responsible for some of the biggest marketing and public relations campaigns in the entertainment business. He was also once upon a time Executive VP of MCA Music Entertainment Group, and VP of Artist Development prior to that.

Over the course of the hour long interview, we learn about some of Charlie’s collections: over 150 boxes of cigars; approximately 20 very exclusive

Dupont lighters; and 12 of the world's most exclusive and important watches. We also hear some of Charlie's thoughts on being a man's man, and how he's changed over the last year. Bob Maron provides some additional insights into the reality of working and hanging with Charlie.

Here is our conversation as it happened:

Jon Shakill: Before Charlie gets on the line I'd like to ask you Bob, tell me about your background and how you and Charlie became friends.

Bob Maron: I've been a watch dealer for 25 years. I was doing an online advertising campaign, and Charlie responded to a watch that I was advertising. He left a message about a watch that he was interested in buying. I actually didn't get back to him, because I was just leaving for Europe and then had been in Europe when he was calling me. So when I got back I had another message on my machine, which was a typical Charlie Sheen, raving message. So I decided to call him back and our first conversation was about why I didn't return his call, as well as about the watch he wanted. So that led to me selling him that one watch, and then many others after that. That was probably 7 or 8 years ago. We became best friends after that pretty quickly, going on vacations together all over the world.

Jon Shakill: So what about Twitter and Facebook, I understand you're heavily involved with Charlie's accounts?

Bob Maron: One year ago, Charlie called me up and said he just finished doing the Good Morning America show, it's a crazy time, I've done the all the TV shows and radio shows, but there's more I want to say to my fans- can you help me? I know that you're on Twitter and on Facebook. I had been trying to get Charlie on the social networking sites for the full year prior to that and he wasn't really receptive to it, but that morning we decided it was the perfect time to go ahead with it. Twitter really gave Charlie a new platform to be able to talk to his fans. When we first signed up for the account, there was so much hype surrounding it. All we did

was sit back and wait, and watch the new followers roll in. It was crazy, we were up to a quarter of a million followers without making a single tweet! When we finally tweeted, it was all over the news an hour later and just went viral, that's when it really took off. In the first 24 hours we got a million followers, and the growth has just been exponential. That's when the Guinness Book of World Records got ahold of Charlie, and let him know that he had just set a new world record for the fastest to reach 1 million followers on Twitter. The next fastest before us was Howard Stern, who had gotten to 1 million followers in 30 days.

Charlie Sheen: This is Charlie here. I might add that we also beat the fastest guy to get to 100,000 followers- he did it in a day, and we did it in less than an hour.

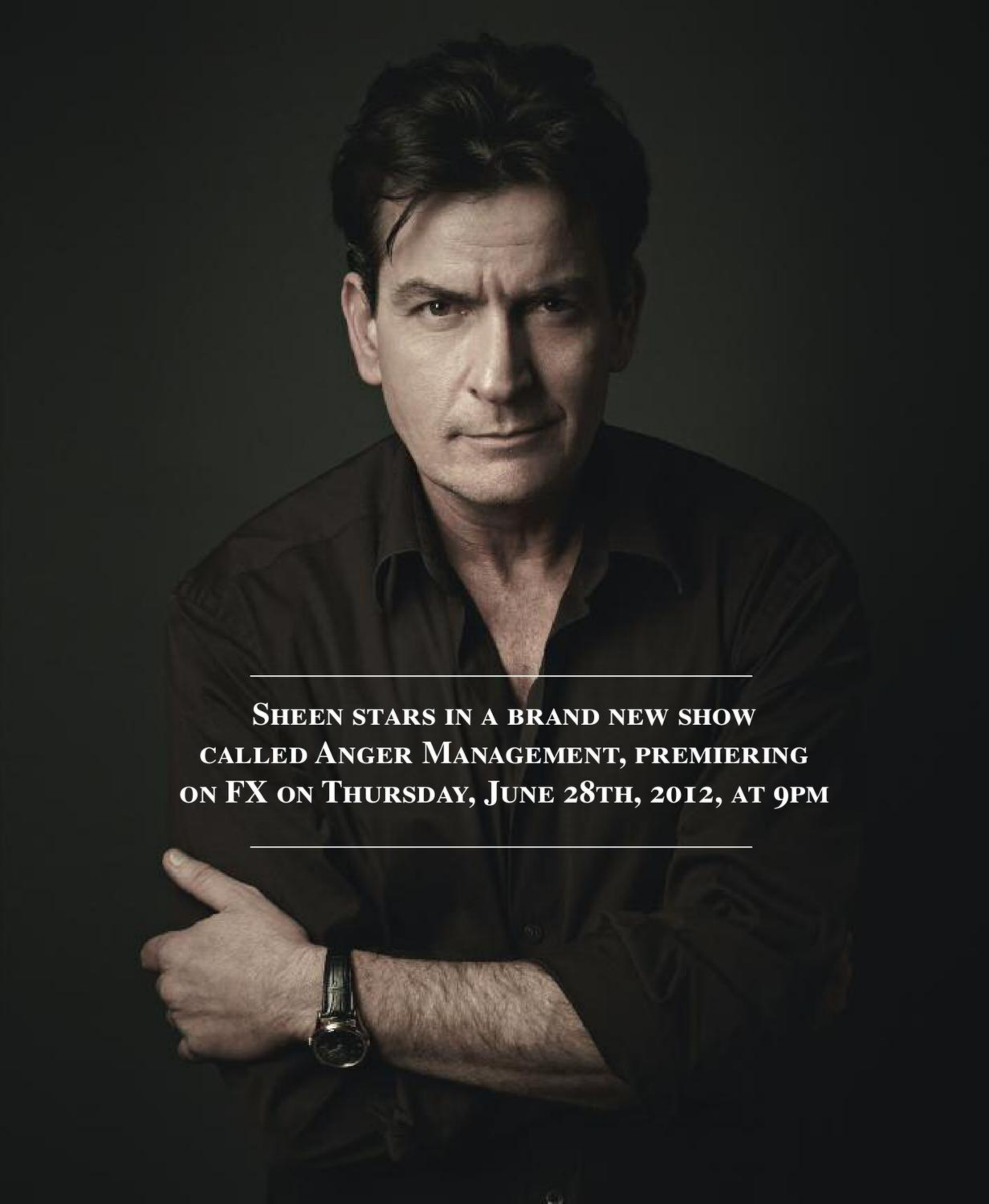
Lincoln Salazar: Hi Charlie, I'm the Chairman and Publisher of Cigar & Spirits Magazine, and we have the Editor-in-Chief, Jon Shakill, with us as well. Cigar & Spirits is very much of a man's man publication, and we thank you for your time today. Jon will be conducting most of the interview, so let's get on with it.

Charlie Sheen: Sounds good, nice to meet you gentlemen.

Jon Shakill: Charlie, nice to meet you. Let's jump right into it with discussing your love for cigars. How big is your cigar collection, and what are your favorite cigars?

Charlie Sheen: Hey Jon how are you. So as for cigars, I don't claim to be an expert but I know what I like and what I don't like. I can read a thousand different reviews and see some cigars rated 99 that I hate, and some rated 75 that I love. As far as brands, I really love Cohiba, Romeo y Julieta, vintage Davidoff, vintage Bolivar, Dunhill- I like to mix it up. Every once in a while I'll smoke a Montecristo A, if I have 7 hours to burn! It's a commitment. I like a lot of the regional, double banded, cigars as well. You know, the other thing- I personally love a lot of Cuban cigars, all the really great stuff comes from the Vintage Cubans and even some of the





**SHEEN STARS IN A BRAND NEW SHOW
CALLED ANGER MANAGEMENT, PREMIERING
ON FX ON THURSDAY, JUNE 28TH, 2012, AT 9PM**

contemporary ones. It's a shame they aren't readily available in the United States, because I'd probably own a lot more of them. I'm fortunate to own an unopened box of Cohiba Siglo VIs from 1991, and also a box of Romeo y Julieta tubos from 1957. The box of 1957 tubos is like a time capsule, there are 25 in a box and when I open up one of the tubes, it's like it went in yesterday- it's amazing.

Jon Shakill: How big is your Cigar collection?

Charlie Sheen: My cigar collection is about 150 boxes or so.

Jon Shakill: Where's your favorite place to enjoy a cigar, do you have a preference?

Charlie Sheen: It's not really specific, sometimes in the backyard, or an after dinner party, maybe even a commercial airplane! (laughs) No not really, but it just depends. Whenever it feels like the right time, that's when I'll do it. It comes and goes in waves for me; sometimes I won't smoke for 3 months, then I'll smoke more often for 6 months, and then forget I have them. But it's always nice that when I return to them, they're still there.

Jon Shakill: So when you are smoking cigars, how many will you have in a day?

Charlie Sheen: Well there's no specific formula, it depends on whichever way the wind is blowing. But sometimes I like to have a Cohiba Sublime Extra and follow it up with a Dunhill Don Candido '72, something mild at the backend for a second cigar.

Jon Shakill: Do you have a particular cigar memory or an experience that comes to mind, that made an impact on you?

Charlie Sheen: Yeah, I was 16 years old and I was driving, and I was smoking a King Edward Swisher Sweet, just because someone had left it in my car. It was the first time I had ever smoked a cigar, and not long after I had to pull over so I could throw up! That's pretty much how it all started (laughs).

Bob Maron: Charlie I know you also have an extensive collection of lighters as well, which would be interesting for the Cigar & Spirits readers.

Charlie Sheen: Well, I'm not really "schooled" on all the details of great lighters, but I own about 15 or 20 of the Dupont lighters that I really love. I don't wear jewelry, so the only accessories I leave the house with are a nice lighter, a nice pen, and a nice watch. I don't wear earrings, or bracelets and necklaces or any of that crap. I just like a good lighter, when you pull it out everyone notices that I don't have a Bic. The only thing that sucks is that everyone wants to look at it, and when they open the top gas just goes flying out, but I don't like to be rude. You know that moment Bob —

Bob Maron: Right, it's that moment, it's the worst— you want to carry around a beautiful Dupont lighter, and you don't really want to let anyone use it, but you also don't want to say, "No you can't use my lighter!"

Charlie Sheen: And it's always some hot chick that opens it for a minute while she's telling a boring story, and she can't get it lit because she's trying to flick the actual flint wheel, right. Then I have to politely say, no-no give it back, let me show you. But other than that, they are kind of a pain in the ass to maintain. Usually when I leave the house with one, I'll also stick a Bic in my back pocket as a back-up.

Jon Shakill: So what's the most expensive lighter that you own?

Charlie Sheen: Honestly . . . well, I bought the Dupont Diamond Rain from the Prestige Collection, which they don't make until you order it. It's got like 489 diamonds all over it. It's about \$75,000; it's solid white gold. You have to keep a roll of quarters in your other jacket pocket when you go out with something like that. But other than that, my collection is pretty much pedestrian Dupont's and some Davidoff's.

[Editor's Note: the ST Dupont Prestige Collection Diamond Rain Lighter actually has 1,098 diamonds covering the entire white gold body; only 352 have ever been made]

Bob Maron: Well what about all of your cigar brand Duponts? I've seen you give away more Cohiba Duponts than you've actually used!

Charlie Sheen: Yeah I know, I know. And when I buy the next one, I'm like "this one I'm keeping!" Then we're there in the cigar lounge, and I always end up saying "here take it" to someone. I think Bob and I have exchanged something like 25 lighters.

Bob Maron: Yeah, every time I pick up a lighter I think, "oh Charlie gave me this one. Where is the rose gold version? Oh yeah I gave it to him." I've never seen anyone give away more lighters than Charlie, his generosity is amazing— and with nice pens too.

Charlie Sheen: Well if it represents some epic evening, or something memorable that we all shared, I think it's nice for someone to have a token of that.

Jon Shakill: Definitely, that's great to be able to do that. OK, let's move over to spirits now. So what is your favorite drink, and do you prefer it on the rocks, or neat?

Charlie Sheen: I've always said that ice is for injuries. You know, I've seen people chip teeth trying to get that last drop! So I guess the term would be neat, is that what they call it? (laughs) I like a good scotch, I like a vintage Armagnac if you can still get them- like a Napoleon or something really, really exotic. As far as wine goes, I'm kind of a Bordeaux snob; I just can't find anything better. The problem is they only make so much of it from the years that I like. The '96 and the '99 Lafite for example are just amazing. I actually just had a party at my house recently where I opened up a bottle of the '96 and a bottle of the '99. When that happens, I start doing the math and it's just ridiculous. I'll look around and everyone is drinking a glass of wine that's worth like \$1,000.

Jon Shakill: I imagine that adds up pretty fast at a house party.

Bob Maron
with
Charlie Sheen





Charlie Sheen: It can, yes. Well even worse than that, you get the people that come over and start putting ice in the vintage Bordeaux! But the only thing I'm really an expert on is Baseball, not even movies or acting. So who knows?

Bob Maron: Let me tell you a quick anecdote before we move on. Larry, Charlie, and I were out celebrating Charlie getting the cover of Rolling Stone. And so the establishment we were at introduced us to a 57 year old Macallan Scotch, and when they told us the price of it, I insisted that we not drink it. About that time is when Charlie insisted that we drink double!

Charlie Sheen: Well that's because no one had cracked the bottle yet.

Bob Maron: Nobody had opened the bottle, that's right! We did it for the first time.

Charlie Sheen: Thinking of the clientele there, and who comes and goes, it was pretty amazing that no one had cracked the bottle yet. So I felt like it should be us.

Bob Maron: Well what's remarkable is that we've been back since, and still no one has touched that bottle, which is surprising.

Charlie Sheen: Yeah, and it was this whole ceremony. They brought out a shot measurer and a guy on his knee to make sure he wasn't going to spill a \$200 drop of the stuff. It was really something. And it tasted amazing too. Not long after that I had some of the 30 year old Macallan, and I don't want to say it was just as good, but it was pretty damn good too.

Jon Shakill: So you could tell the difference I gather.

Charlie Sheen: Well yeah, the difference when you get the bill is \$2,800 versus \$300. I guess it's the extra 27 years—you have to pay for that.

Jon Shakill: Was that the most expensive drink you've ever had?

Charlie Sheen: For sure it was the most expensive drink I've bought out at a bar or restaurant. Like I mentioned before, back in the day I used to drink Napoleon Armagnac fairly often. So the most I've ever spent on a bottle of anything would have to be that, which at the time was about \$7,000. But that same stuff today would go for like \$24,000.

Jon Shakill: Do you still have any of that Napoleon Armagnac on reserve, or is it all gone?

Charlie Sheen: Yeah it's done, it's over, no more of that stuff left. It's part of the Malibu Lake legacy now I guess.



Jon Shakill: So what do you normally drink when you're smoking a cigar?

Charlie Sheen: Well, it's kind of bizarre, but I drink either Grape Soda or Orange Crush, because of the way they mask any bitterness when I'm down into the final third of the stick. I've been experimenting with different types of sodas. I'm not a big drinker when smoking a cigar, because if you overdo it, you can just be talking then suddenly you're puking on somebody, you know?

(Laughs)

Jon Shakill: That actually leads me right into my next question. What would you say to the people out there who have the opinion that you drink too much?

Charlie Sheen: I'd tell them that I don't drink any more . . . or any less. But really what I'd tell them is to mind their own fucking business. I mean it's like, the last time I checked I wasn't up in their grill counting their drinks, you know what I mean? It's the quid pro quo, you know? I just think if people had more substantial shit going on in their own lives, they wouldn't focus on other people so much. I believe people should keep their nose in their own plate. Everybody has some sense of entitlement to some inroad or conduit to unsolicited advice as to how to live your life in that regard. It gets tedious and redundant.

Bob Maron: Let me just add something to what Charlie's saying. I've been drinking with him for 6 years, and I've seen him drink a lot of liquor, but there's a difference between drinking and getting drunk. I think I've seen Charlie drunk twice. Who can't say the same thing about one of their buddies?

Charlie Sheen: Both times there was a shooting, but we're not going to talk about that.

(Laughs)



Charlie Sheen: No but really, it's part of my code, it's part of my credo—just mind your own freakin business unless somebody asks for it themselves.

Jon Shakill: That makes sense to me. So Charlie, with the understanding that you're a major watch collector, some estimates put your collection worth about \$5.6 million. Is that accurate?

Charlie Sheen: You know, I don't really look at a collection based on its monetary value. I only have 12 watches, and it's not about what they're worth. I mean, it's nice what they're worth when you want to turn one over or sell it, or put it into a trade. But each watch represents something to me that either happened on the day that I bought it, or what was happening in my life when I made the decision to pull the trigger on it. The way Bob and I were doing stuff when we first got together, it was pretty epic. We had 2 cases coming out of Germany, and 3 dials coming out of Italy, and some other guy would send us vintage straps. There were moments Bob, what would you say was floating around globally in 1 trade with like 8 watches, like \$3 Million?

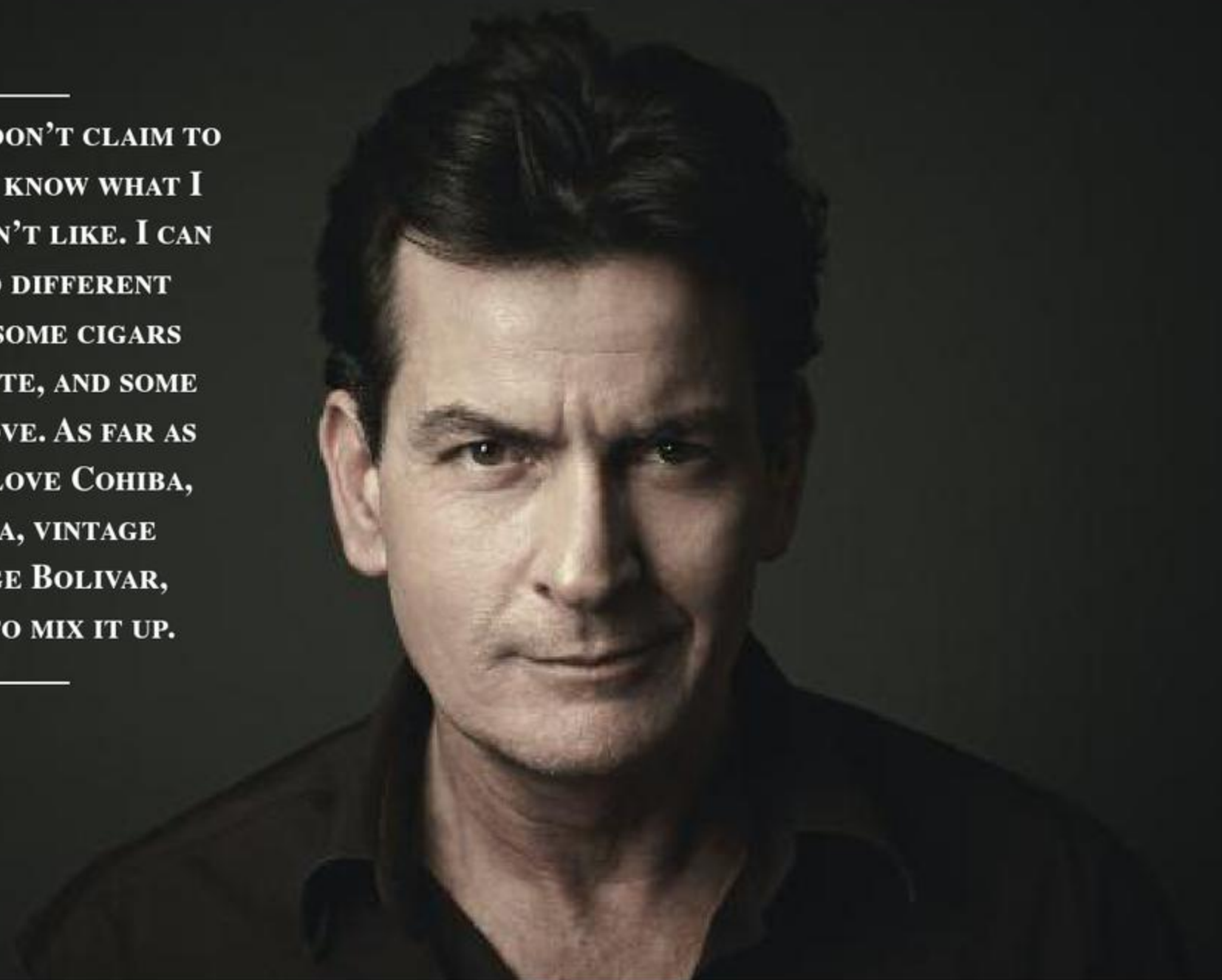
Bob Maron: Oh absolutely, at least.

Charlie Sheen: So it was really very exciting, it was very adrenal. And unlike most things that you have so much passion for, then it arrives and sucks, with Patek Philippe there's never a letdown. Especially when you've only seen photos and you're waiting for something for a couple weeks or a month, or whatever, and it finally shows up—it's a pretty cool moment to say the least. You can feel the history and the artisanship involved in this ridiculously incredible timepiece.

Jon Shakill: So what's your favorite watch, or the watch you wear on a day-to-day basis?

Charlie Sheen: I just started wearing a Patek Philippe 5078 Repeater. I really don't want to set myself up for a street mugging here though. But

SO AS FOR CIGARS, I DON'T CLAIM TO BE AN EXPERT BUT I KNOW WHAT I LIKE AND WHAT I DON'T LIKE. I CAN READ A THOUSAND DIFFERENT REVIEWS AND SEE SOME CIGARS RATED 99 THAT I HATE, AND SOME RATED 75 THAT I LOVE. AS FAR AS BRANDS, I REALLY LOVE COHIBA, ROMEO Y JULIETA, VINTAGE DAVIDOFF, VINTAGE BOLIVAR, DUNHILL- I LIKE TO MIX IT UP.



anyways, the great thing about Patek is that it doesn't scream Bling, it doesn't stand out like a piece of jewelry. It's just a nice timepiece. Really the most important thing is that it's not just about the artifact, but like with any collection, it's how something really speaks to you and what it means to you. Like I'll see someone wearing a Panerai with wrists as small as mine, and I'm like "dude, it's okay if everyone in the world doesn't see your watch today." It's like the guy who smokes his cigar so everyone can purposely see the band on it.

Jon Shakill: How long have you been collecting watches? Is it something you grew up with, or just gained an appreciation for as an adult?

Charlie Sheen: I've been wearing a watch since I was like 6 years old. It's something I've always loved and grew up with.

Bob Maron: Charlie is a very astute collector of watches, he has an uncanny ability to seek out and determine what's going to be the next timeless watch that maybe wasn't yet recognized. From the first time that I spoke with him, he called me about a very simple watch, but it was a very important watch. It was a Patek Philippe 5022 rose gold with a rose dial, which was incredibly rare. It seemed like a simple Calatrava, but it really wasn't. It was rose gold, and had an engine turn dial, and at the time some people thought of it as a silly watch. But today it's an important watch, and it's worth twice as much as it was 7 years ago.

Jon Shakill: Bob, who is your typical buyer of the vintage Patek Philippe? Can you tell us more about Charlie's collection from your expert opinion?

Bob Maron: I specialize in the vintage Patek, and virtually all of the people that I sell Pateks to are either overseas or are "well ahead" in years. It's people that remember these watches and wished they'd owned them in the 1940s and '50s, and here you have Charlie a young guy in his early 40s at that time, talking to me about the 1947 Patek. I didn't have any other customers like that. There are very few guys our age that are collecting watches from before we were born, as most people gravitate toward modern watches. Charlie also has some incredible modern timepieces as well. Charlie has an eclectic collection from some of the rarest, more important vintage watches anywhere in the world, and also some of the rarest modern watches. There's always something about his watches that make them unique—they're always 1 of 1, or 1 of 2, or 1 of 3 ever made. I've been doing this for 25 years, and there's still times when Charlie will tell me something I didn't know about a watch, I mean he really does his research. Few people know how astute he really is when it comes to the things that he's interested in. He has this incredible quest for knowledge. He really has impeccable taste, which is probably what has made him such a successful collector. His collection is worth considerably more today than what he's paid for it. It has to do with his ability to foresee what will be collectible.

Charlie Sheen: And also, for instance, in the film I just did with Roman Coppola called *A Glimpse Inside the Mind of Charles Swan III*, I wore a 1940s stainless 565 Calatrava. Which, Bob, is one of the best examples of that watch, wouldn't you say?

Bob Maron: It's two-fold, a reference to a 565 is to begin with probably

the iconic Patek Philippe Calatrava made in the last 50 years, of all that have been made. The specific one that Charlie owns is probably the rarest and most sought after dial in the world. There are probably 1, or maybe 2, other watches in the world that are equal to that quality. It's a two-tone bulls-eye dial, with Arabic numbers, which is like the one that sits in the Patek Philippe museum. And it wasn't just luck, it was research and patience.

Charlie Sheen: It's sentimental now as well, because it was what I wore during the movie, so it will be part of my permanent collection. I can't get rid of it now. There are some watches that just leave the factory absolutely perfect, and that's been 95% of the Pateks for me, but occasionally I'll get one, especially when Bob gives it to me with a brown strap, it's like, you might as well just shove my mother Bob! (Laughs). I got a thing about brown straps, I just don't wear them.

Jon Shakill: What was the inspiration that sparked your passion for watches?

Charlie Sheen: Well like I said, I always wore a watch as a child. At age 12 I was in Tokyo with my family, and insisted that Mom buy me a gold Seiko World Time, which I still have believe it or not. The first actual decent watch I owned was a Concord.

Bob Maron: Wow, you know Charlie, we've never actually had this conversation before, but the first watch I ever owned was a Seiko also, and the first decent watch I ever owned was a Concord. That's amazing.

Charlie Sheen: Wow, that's great.

Jon Shakill: Interesting, I can tell you guys have a serious passion for



watches. Why don't we turn to a couple other topics briefly. Charlie, I understand you were a car collector as well, is that something you're still into?

Charlie Sheen: Well I used to be a car collector, but I'm really not anymore. I'm not even a driver anymore, I'm just a rider. I ended up selling all my cars.

Bob Maron: Didn't I buy your last car from you Charlie? It was a 1970 Chevelle LS6 Convertible, black with white tuxedo stripes, 1 of 17 made.

Jon Shakill: OK, so let's touch a little bit on your career. What's your favorite movie that you've made?

Charlie Sheen: The most fun I ever had making a movie was actually on Three Musketeers, and also most recently the film I just finished working on with Roman Coppola. I had an absolute ball. I went from making \$2 million a week, to making \$1,700. At some point it's really not about the dough, it's about the experience, the people, it's about whatever you're going to encounter and the realities of each day. I don't really think I've made my favorite movie yet. But the film I just finished working on was great. It was the first time in a long time that I felt very relaxed and had fun with it. I parked the ego, I parked the vanity, and I parked all the bullshit, and just hit the marks and said the words. I didn't complicate it.

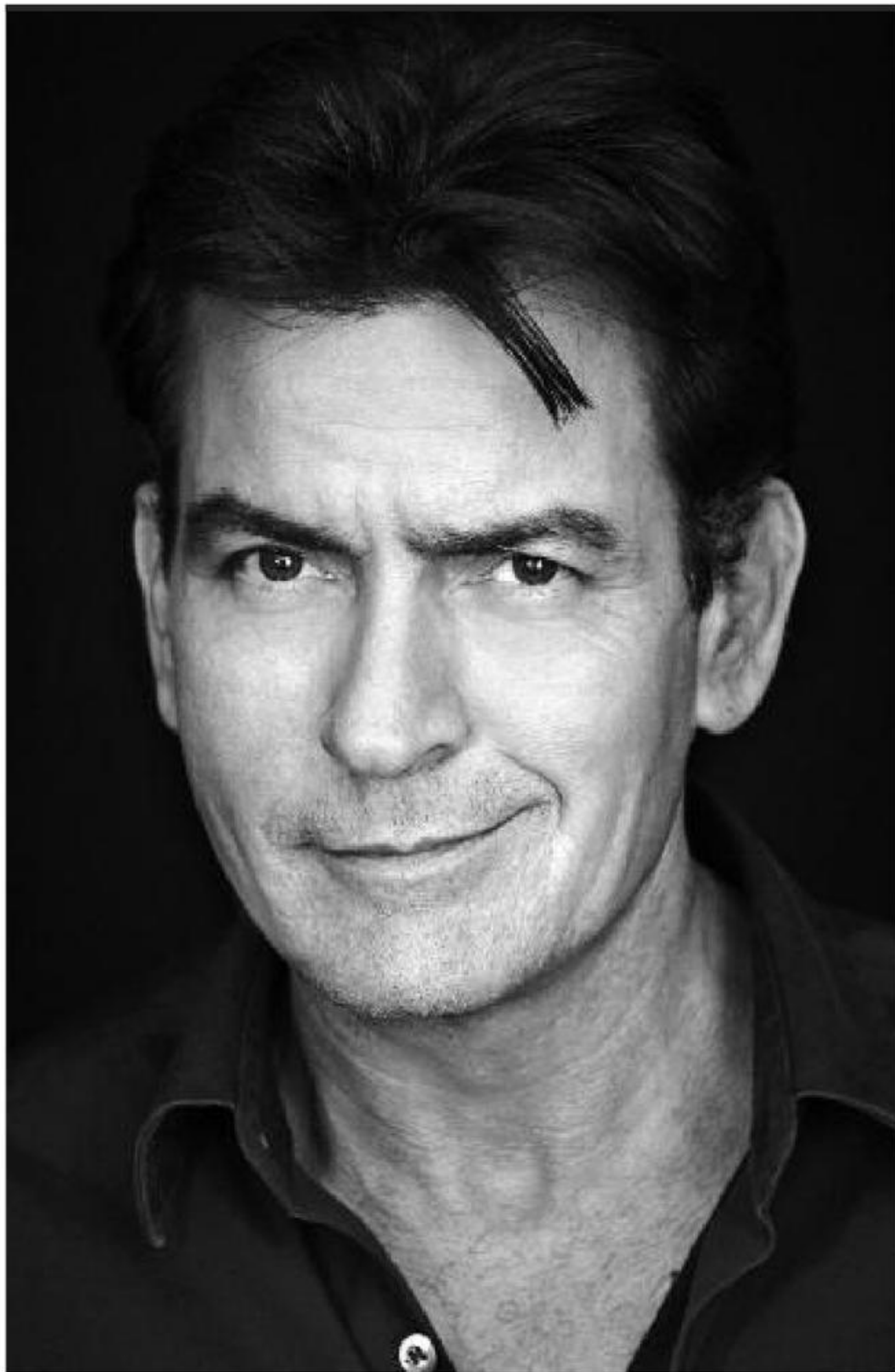
Jon Shakill: It sounds like you got back to the roots with this new movie.

Charlie Sheen: Yeah, exactly

Jon Shakill: How do you view your place in history as an actor?

Charlie Sheen: That's something I really choose not to comment on, because it comes across as grandiose. I mean as far as my place among actors, I can't really say, because I don't have perspective on it. I leave that for other people to figure out.

Lincoln Salazar: Charlie, you portray an image of being a man's man, someone who doesn't take crap from anybody. Can you tell us what it means to you to be man's man?



Charlie Sheen: Really it comes down to the fact that I have true passion for the things that I care about. Sometimes people can interpret my passion as anger or rage or something else, but really it's not. It's just passion, I don't know how else to describe it. But when there's no passion, then it becomes inauthentic. Then you know you're doing something that doesn't support your personal code. There's always those nights when it should end, but it doesn't. And I always say to people, "what's a better story in 20 years, that we all went home? Or that we went another direction and made it memorable." So I'm usually the one who puts out the challenge to see who really has some salt in their soul.

Lincoln Salazar: So having passion and living with authenticity.

Charlie Sheen: Also, pedicures and not manicures. Especially if you played a lot of sports like I did, your feet can get destroyed. I always tell people Michael Jordan had them twice a month. Don't do manicures. I also don't use hair products that obviously change the

color of my hair, I don't wear the shirt or fashion of the moment because by the time dinner is over the fashion will be labeled as out. I wear the stuff that I'm comfortable in, that fits right. It's like, I collected Andy Warhol paintings for years, then one day I looked around and I have nothing but soup cans, soup boxes, and dollar signs on the walls, and I'm thinking "what the hell is this?" It's 1960s advertising. He was a genius and a trailblazer, but at some point you ask yourself, did I buy it because I liked it? Or because I wanted to sell it? Or what. It really just speaks to having conviction about the things that you do. I love the tequila commercials with Michael Imperioli because he's pretty much laying out a lot of the stuff that should be fixed, or needs to be abolished. I don't know, it just feels like guys have lost their balls quite frankly.

Lincoln Salazar: I believe that guys should stand strong and have their voice heard, and having that passion is key. Something I've gotten from you in this discussion is that you believe in passion, relationships, and living life to its fullest.

Charlie Sheen: Yes of course! I mean this thing life isn't a rehearsal. I had a buddy die just a couple weeks ago from prostate cancer and it was just awful. It was my dear friend Zalman King. You realize in those moments—which it shouldn't take moments like that—that you cannot alter or capture or purchase or in any way manipulate time.

Lincoln Salazar: What's something that you want to leave behind as your legacy for fellow men?

Charlie Sheen: Just that I'm a guy that inspired people to seek the truth. To seek the truth in whatever you're doing, whether it's relationships, or your job, or recreationally, if you're embracing the truth then you're right at the epicenter, and you're in the middle of it. There's something else that I've discovered recently, which is that it's also about the moments in between the moments. It's not always about the big party, or the fancy car, or the beautiful date. It's the moment outside of all that, where it's a quiet, personal moment. The moment of reflection, or of some epiphany where you peek inside and find out what's wrong or what's great, or what's both. When you can recognize those moments, and actually feel them and realize it, I think that's where life exists.

Bob Maron: That's all the time we have guys, thanks for including me in the interview.

Charlie Sheen: Hey guys, this is great, thank you.

Jon Shakill: It's been fun, thank you.

Lincoln Salazar: Thank you gentlemen for your time, we very much appreciate it.

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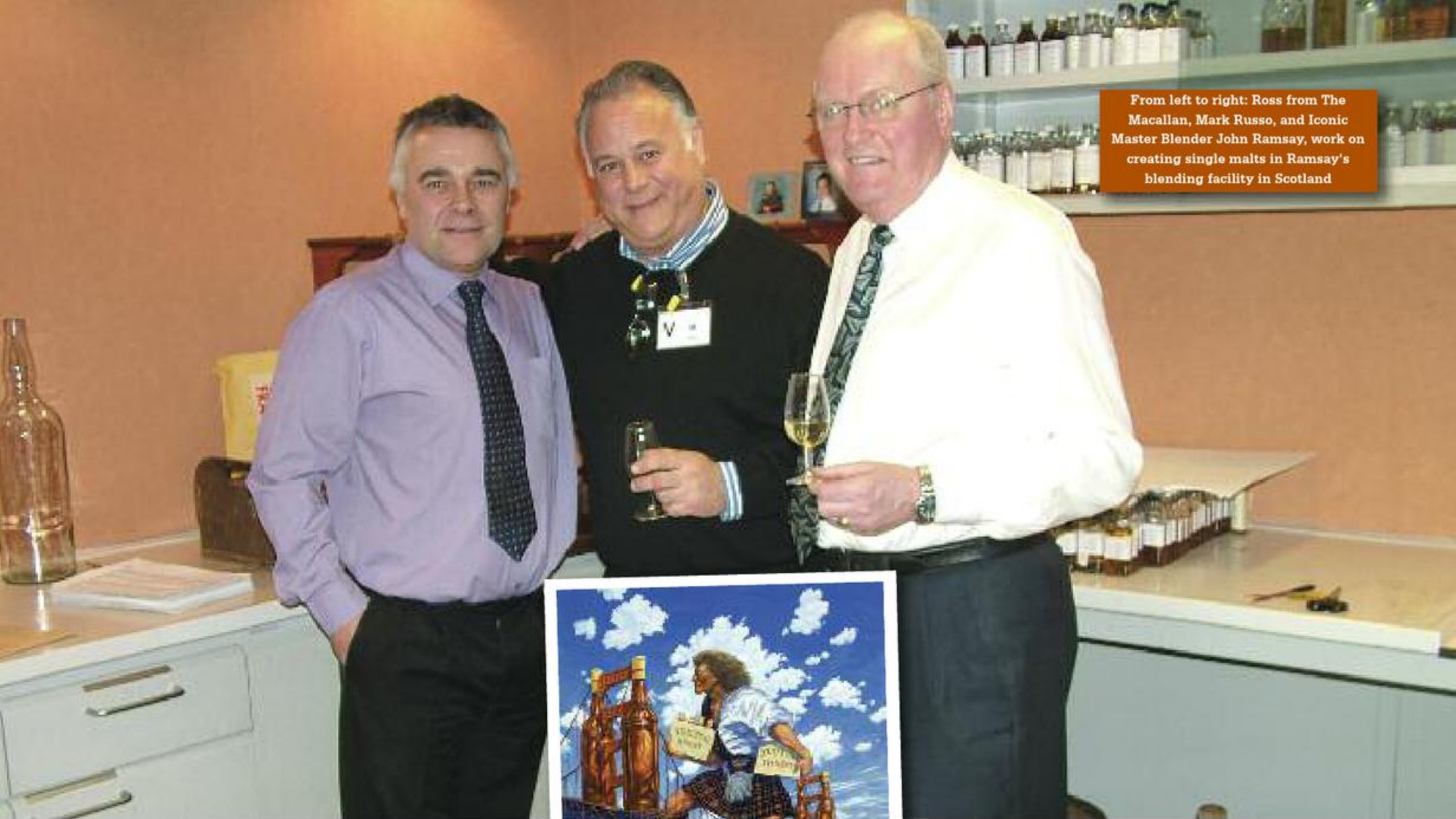




The Angel's Share Collection from Mark Russo

**LIVE THE ULTRA LUXURY LIFESTYLE
WITH THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE
CUSTOM MADE SCOTCH, INCREDIBLE
EXCURSIONS, AND \$1,000 CULT WINE**

by JON SHAKILL



From left to right: Ross from The Macallan, Mark Russo, and Iconic Master Blender John Ramsay, work on creating single malts in Ramsay's blending facility in Scotland



Have you ever wanted to get a taste of history? The question may seem odd at first, but let me explain. If you're not familiar with fine vintage spirits, that's exactly what the experience represents. There are many ways of being enlightened by history, whether it's reading it in a book, viewing an artist's classical masterpiece, or even by experiencing it as it happens. Another way, is to pour it into a glass, watching several decades stream and swish before you, all in a moment's time. You hold it in your hand, letting its aromas wash over your senses, and suddenly, you feel intoxicated before having taken a single sip. It's the moment of realization, that what you're about to sip and savor was made long ago, by individuals who gave great care to its creation, and are no longer living. Yes, this is what history tastes like.

The first time I met Mark Russo, he had with him a very special case. Inside of it was a bottle of extremely rare, 53 year old single malt Scotch whisky, from the Highland Park distillery. This Scotch was made and sealed shut in an oak barrel to age, when Dwight D. Eisenhower was President of the United States. About half an hour into the meeting, Mark asked if I'd like to sample the whisky. With a wide smile, I obliged. And so with the necessary "slainte," meaning to good health and said in Ireland and Scotland in replace of "cheers," we took in the aroma and savored each sip.

The aromas are unbelievable, and contribute to the pronounced caramel flavor. The smoothness of each sip as it goes down is incredible. There's

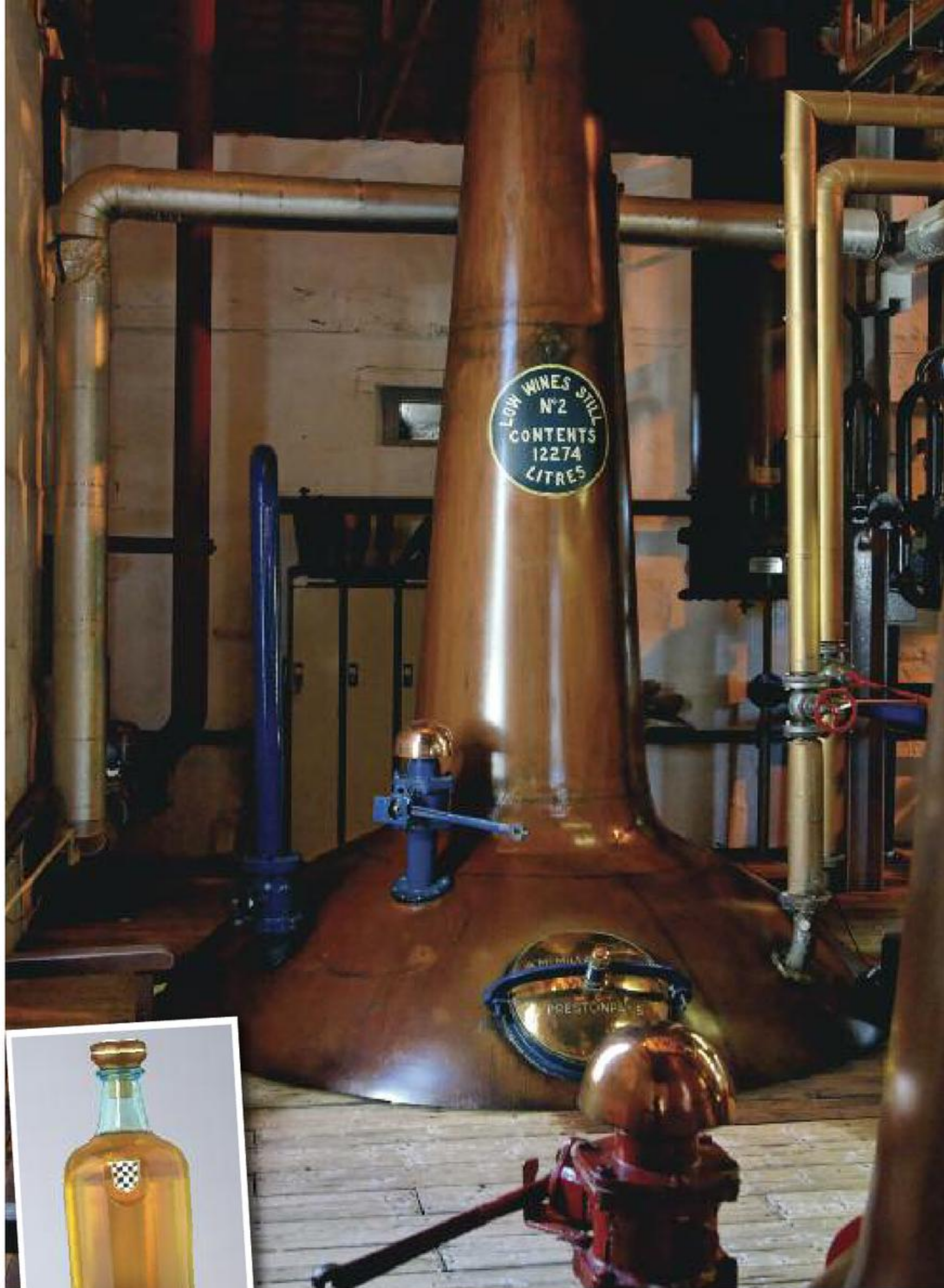
absolutely no cringing or unintended facial contortions here, as this is a spirit of the utmost caliber. You must have the prerequisite appreciation before indulging in such a spirit, the knowledge that each sip must be small and deliberate, and the understanding that mere dollars do not represent the value of this priceless experience.

This is the Scotch whisky of the Angel's Share Collection, by Mark Russo. It can only be purchased by the individual cask, the contents of which yield 100 to 175, 750ml bottles, depending on the age of whisky selected. The longer a whisky ages, the less of it that's left in the barrel, as over the years a portion evaporates- the evaporated whisky is commonly referred to as "the angel's share." This is a main reason why the older the whisky, the rarer it is.

You must put 50% of the money down prior to the customization of your specific Scotch; the total cost will run you a handsome \$375,000. The Angel's Share Collection is the bespoke, Rolls Royce level experience for whisky, as everything is custom tailored to the individual who purchases the product. Once you've created your own personal cask of Scotch, there will never be another one exactly like it ever made, ensuring that the contents of your cask is very exclusive, and incredibly rare. Each time a sip is taken from the Angel's Share Collection, it's gone forever.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Mr. Russo owns a variety of single malt Scotches, between the ages of 35 to 56 years old, which are inevitably extremely rare. These Scotch whiskies are all single malts, and options are available from several different distilleries. So when an individual puts the money down on a cask,



the buyer can determine when they want the Scotch to be bottled.

At that point the process is finished, by placing the entire contents of that single cask into hand-blown custom glass bottles. The buyer picks the color of the bottle, and a specialized mark of ownership symbolizing the unique interest of the owner. Each bottle is individually numbered, and can never be purchased by anyone else, anywhere else in the world. Customization includes the age of the Scotch, the distillery it came from, the barrel it's rested in to marry flavors, how long it's rested up to 1 year, and the specific alcohol content 40% or above. And like an art collection, you have your personal Angel's Share Collection, a perfect reflection of yourself as a unique and singular expression which can never be created again.

LIVING THE ULTRA LUXURY LIFESTYLE

Mark Russo is the creator of Angel's Share International, which is an ultra-premium luxury lifestyle company focusing on food, wine, and spirits. The company caters to those that can afford the very best of the best. Angel's Share provides everything from the amazing custom made Scotches discussed, to the ultimate in luxury lifestyle experiences, excursions, and events. Whether it's an unbelievable Napa Valley wine tour that includes overnight stays in grand chateaus, an amazing yacht trip in Monaco, or an ultra-exclusive golf excursion to Asia, Mark has crafted it

the decision making process begins. For example, the buyer may sample single malts from four different distilleries, and decide on a particular distillery. Then they might narrow it down to a choice between a 36 year old, 42 year old, 48 year old, or 54 year old. After the distillery and the age statement are chosen, the buyer then samples whiskies that have been sitting in different types of Bordeaux barrels, whether it's a Lafite barrel, a Latour barrel, or other various types. So the custom Scotch may end up being a 48 year old Glen-goyne, that's then going to rest in a Lafite Bordeaux barrel. Over the course of the next 10 months to 1 year, that particular Scotch will sit in the Lafite barrel to marry the flavors. Once a month Mark Russo will send a sample to the buyer so they can experience how their custom made Scotch is developing. At any point over the course of this period,

for major sports figures, celebrities, and high net worth individuals from all over the world.

In fact, Mark is the creator of the world's finest and most expensive private jet golf excursion to Asia. This remarkable excursion lasts for 2 weeks, and explores 4 Asian countries, all via private jet. The package is food and wine driven, with golf as its primary focus. The rounds of golf that are included in the trip are played at elite private membership clubs, with memberships running \$1 million a year! Mr. Russo told me that "if you showed up to one of these clubs with \$10,000 in your pocket to play a round of golf, and you weren't a member, they'd politely ask you to please leave immediately." Beyond the finest accommodations, the excursion also includes a dinner with the King and Queen of Thailand, and a stay aboard an incredible yacht. The cost for this vacation you might ask? \$1,300,000.00, yes that's right, \$1.3 million.

Mark is also the owner and winemaker of The Black Bottle Winery, producing an extraordinary Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon cult wine, which goes for \$1,000 a bottle—that is if you can even get your hands on one. The story behind starting the wine in his words is: "Robert Mondavi was a personal friend and before he passed away I asked him if he would try my wine and give me his opinion as a top winemaker. He tried it, asked me where the grapes were from and I said 'Napa Valley, it's a cabernet from Napa Valley Bob.' He tried it again and said, 'Well Mark, it's not a very good Napa Valley cabernet,' and I thought damn, Robert Mondavi doesn't like my

wine. Then he added, 'this is really a gorgeous wine with Old World character, I think you'll be very successful with it.'" So this is the Black Bottle, made of the finest grapes from select hillside vineyards, in very small quantities, and only available directly from the winery via a limited allocation list. Proof of its success is that it immediately sells out upon release to collectors and wine enthusiasts. There's a 6 month waiting list to get onto the allocation list. Mark is also the proprietor of one of America's singular wine events, The California Cult Wine Classic, where up to 20 "cult" wines, each costing over \$1,000 a bottle, are enjoyed over an evening of wine and food appreciation.

MARK RUSSO, LUXURY LIFESTYLE EXTRAORDINAIRE

Prior to forming Angel's Share International, Mark Russo was the Brand Ambassador for The Macallan Scotch whisky. He got his start as a food, wine, and spirits connoisseur early-on by studying at a prestigious Italian Culinary Academy, and subsequently opening a very successful restaurant in Newport Beach, CA. Thereafter, Mark attended UC Berkeley where he ended up meeting Julia Child, who then became a lifelong mentor and friend. Julia Child, Robert Mondavi, and Dick Graf created the nonprofit group called the American Institute of Wine & Food, and Mark was an early and powerful advocate for the organization. Today Mark is Chairman Emeritus of AIWF's Northern California Chapter.

So if you're a titan of industry, a wealthy celebrity, a hedge fund manager, or perhaps just the latest Mega Millions winner, you might want to contact Mr. Russo for the most exclusive lifestyle options you can find. Otherwise, you can appreciate the fact that you gained some insights into the world of the rich and powerful. Visit www.angelsshare.com and www.blackbottlewinery.com to find out more.





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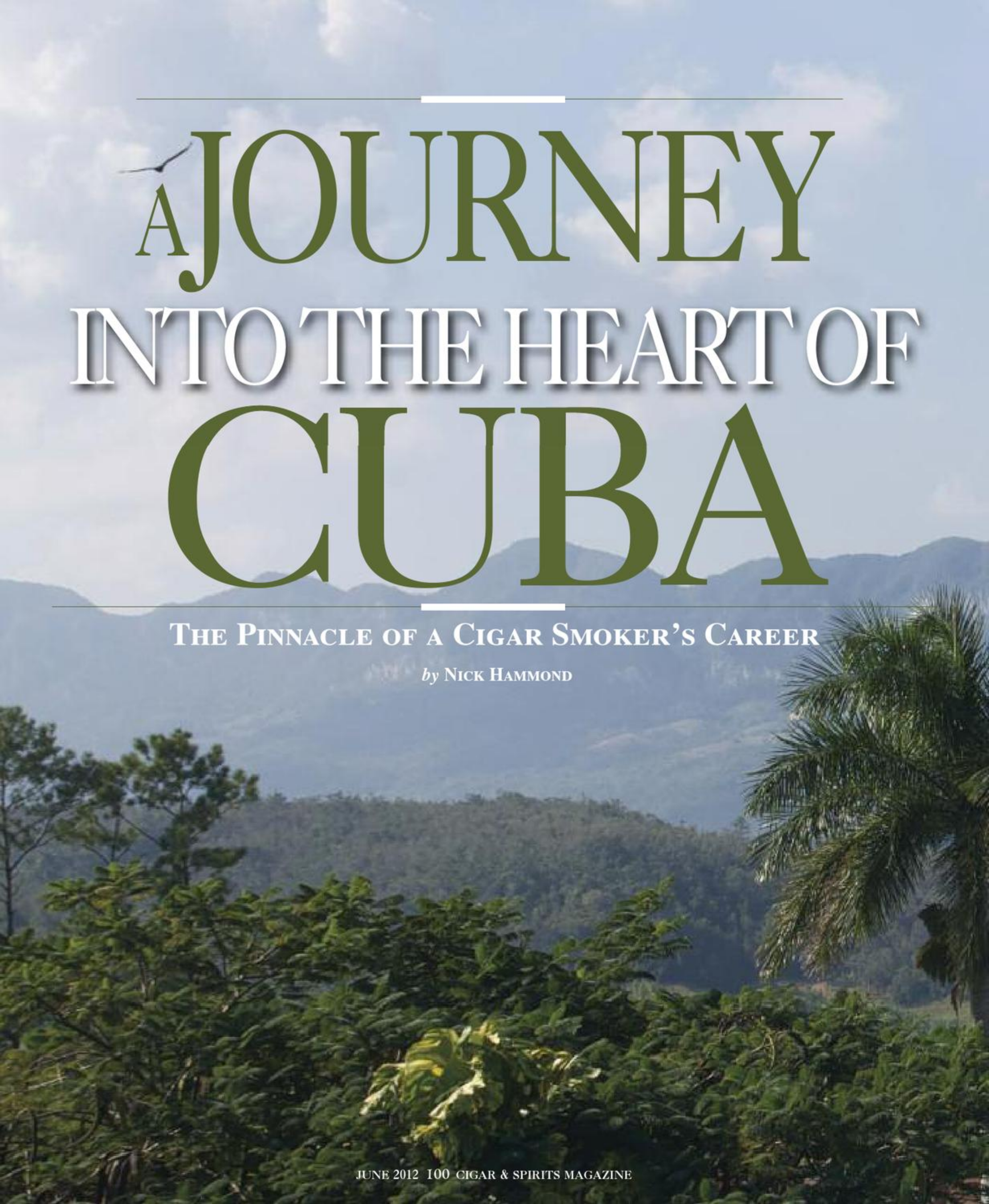


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A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF CUBA

THE PINNACLE OF A CIGAR SMOKER'S CAREER

by NICK HAMMOND



M

name is Nick Hammond and I'm a cigar journalist from the United Kingdom, where Cuban cigars can be legally bought and sold. I've reviewed cigars from all over the world and recently undertook the 4,000 mile journey from London to Havana for the first time to report on the 21st Amigos de Partagas Festival. I want to take you on the journey with me, briefly, as we explore some of what Cuba has to offer.

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Republic of Cuba is the Caribbean's largest island archipelago, a mere 90 miles south of Miami, and home to 11 million people. Its main economic export is sugar, followed by nickel and then tobacco – the reason for so many visits to this vibrant, colourful nation. Cuba's position on the planet has blessed the island with the perfect topography and climate to produce stunning examples of *Nicotiana tobacum* - the plant from which fine, hand-rolled cigars are made.

As you may know, since the revolution in 1959 led by Fidel Castro, Cuba has been a single party Socialist state. Utilities, businesses, and private

property including tobacco plantations, were appropriated by the state and have been run by them ever since. After the infamous Cuban Missile Crises in 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy signed a complete diplomatic and commercial embargo on Cuba, which stands to this day. The night before doing so however, he sent a Whitehouse aide on a mission to buy 1,200 of his favourite Petit Upmann Cuban smokes. Even JFK didn't want to be without his Cuban cigars, despite being in the midst of a heated diplomatic standoff.

AND SO THE JOURNEY BEGINS:

The climb is a steep one, curling snakelike up the mountainside. Our taxi inches perilously close to the edge at times. One of the passengers closes his eyes and lays back his head against his bouncing seat. If we're going to have an accident, he doesn't want to know about it.

Onwards we lurch, crawling past indolent oxen and their silent, watchful owners. Sharp square patches of bloody soil stand out in relief against the verdant backdrop of palms, grass and rocks. This is Pinar del Rio.





Vinales Valley is our destination. From an escarpment atop this hillside, we look down and across a scene of breath-taking beauty. Turkey vultures glide past at eye height as if on zipwires, occasionally tilting their primaries to rise effortlessly on the thermals generated by the baking, soldering overhead sun.

Palm trees, isolated in their languid, windswept motion, speckle the valley floor. Great ridges erupt from the rich red soil, towering cliffs that stand like islands in the lush greenery. They are draped with cascading foliage, vine-like tendrils tumbling from their brow like untidy tendrils of hair.

The valley floor appears well manicured from a distance with triangular, palm-strewn constructions appearing occasionally at the end of small, dusty tracks. These are the curing barns, or casa del tobacco, where the tobacco leaves are strung after picking to begin the curing process, which will turn them from lurid green to rich, warm brown.

The landscape is prehistoric; if a T-Rex stalked across the vista, I don't think any of us would raise a murmur. As it is, speech seems unnecessary. The only sounds are the soft clink of an espresso cup from the café behind me, and the munch of a resting oxen chewing the cud.

This is my first trip to Cuba; long dreamed of, planned, envisaged. And now, as I torch a custom-blend robusto rolled for me yesterday in Havana and pose for some photos, I finally feel that I've arrived. Ask anyone who's



been, and they'll tell you the island is a paradox. Rich and poor, new and old, tasteful and tacky, good and bad; all lumped together in this incredible Caribbean melting pot.

Quite apart from the music, weather, beaches, nightlife, rum and fishing, Cuba has a separate allure for cigar lovers; for this is where – arguments notwithstanding – the finest tobacco on earth is grown. The crimson soil, tilled by hand and oxen, produces such startlingly complex and layered flavours when converted by sun and water into broad tobacco leaves, that men have coveted it for centuries. It remains exclusive and expensive, all the more alluring in the U.S. because of the ban slapped on it by a past President.

On my second day in town, I am treated to the rare luxury of a tour around the legendary El Laguito cigar factory, not normally open to the public. It's the place where Cuba's most iconic cigar is perfected – the instantly recognizable Cohiba.

Its flashy gold, black and white bands are seen as status symbols among many – and there's no doubt some of the Cohiba blends are simply stellar. Upon arriving in the factory manager's small office, I'm handed a heavy, unbanded truncheon of a smoke. It's a Behike 56, hot off the presses. Even though it's stiflingly humid in the small space, the smoke fires up brilliantly, rich flavours drifting across my palate from the first puff. The Behike line has been a smash for Habanos SA, the government cigar-producing organization on the island. In ring gauges of 52, 54 and



56, it's a powerful but refined smoke, delivering all you'd want from a cigar with a lot of panache.

The factory itself is colonial in appearance, white faceted and tucked away in the suburbs of Havana. If the outside is impressive, the inside is careworn in a typically Cuban way. It is a happy place though, and not only for me as a privileged visitor. The workers – predominantly women and all clothed in the proud gold of the brand – are a smiling, contented crew. Their demeanor pervades the splendor of the building and a tour of this factory, with its rolling, color grading, packaging, and banding rooms, is a delight.

In one of these rooms, a huge stack of black lacquered Behike boxes as high as my waist, awaits transportation. Its just one many inconsistencies about this country that such a pile of capitalist consumer products – destined to sell abroad for several years' wages for the average Cuban worker – sits garishly in this crumbling socialist factory.

With the help of an interpreter, I'm able to get answers to pertinent questions about the consistency of blending and quality control. And although the tour is a bit rushed, it's with a heightened sense of thanks for the cigar-maker's role that I step back outside the factory about an hour later and wait for my taxi.



It's very easy to take for granted our sticks as we smoke them, but seeing what is necessary to get the final product to us is always an eye-opener. The skill and precision that goes into a Cohiba has to be seen to be believed.

A trip to Cuba remains the pinnacle of the cigar smoker's career; a chance to enjoy freshly-rolled smokes hot off the benches of the world's most iconic cigar brands; the opportunity to learn more about the agronomy involved in growing, processing, ageing and marketing such a unique product; and the gift of meeting like-

minded enthusiasts from across the globe. As we all know, nothing unites like a cigar. Each night, after a breathless day of cigar tours, buying and smoking, we meet under the terrace of the grand old Nacional in Havana, the 1930s hotel where history stalks every corridor. Here we sample a mojito or a Bucanero beer, fire up another sample of the island's cigar smorgasbord, and recount stories long into the night.



There are Italians, Dutch, Germans, Russians, French, Swiss, Canadians and more than a smattering of U.S. citizens. They come from a range of backgrounds, from dentists to coffee shop owners. Many of them are involved in the cigar 'trade,' whether as hoteliers, restaurateurs, cigar store owners, collectors, or journalists like me. And sitting, laughing, drinking and smoking with them is a sheer education – one that is truly unforgettable.

Nick Hammond writes for a number of magazines and websites, sometimes under the pen name of Monty Cristo. You can find out more at www.montycristo.com



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Marvin D.C.

WASHINGTON D.C.'S SOULFUL BELGIAN LOUNGE CREATION

by TIFFANY N. PERRY

Uncovering one of the most unique bars in Washington, D.C. requires a trip to the northwest side of 14th Street in the Shaw neighborhood, by the intersection of U Street. Possibly the only one of its kind, Marvin creates a seamless combination of a soul lounge bar and Belgian eatery. Situated behind a simplistic exterior – basic black paint over a multi-paned window – this unique establishment blends a biergarten, smoking patio, and lively bistro.

As dusk settles over the District, I notice a bottle of champagne being chilled in the main window before I walk into the front entrance. To the right, a hostess is ready to lead me to a table in the café-style restaurant encompassing the downstairs level. Straight ahead is the stairway to the patio and small, interior lounge. Climbing to the upper floor, I find that the deck is a very open space, with a partial roof. This bar area is smoker friendly, and allows cigar enthusiasts to enjoy a stogie – so long as it is in the uncovered portion.

The concept of Marvin is to honor a specific time in the life of the acclaimed soul singer, Marvin Gaye, a D.C. native. Over a two year period, Gaye lived in the Belgian town of Ostend, and the bar is only two blocks away from the high school he attended. The décor also maintains the fusion concept through the incorporation of wood accents and furniture juxtaposed against bright murals. There is a merger of past and present through the aesthetics and staffing, by finding alternative nuances to blend with an old-world European style. Vintage fans, wicker stools, and antiqued mirrors behind the bar greet customers in the open rooftop bar, but the lounge maintains a slightly more intimate atmosphere. The walls are covered with photographs of seminal R&B and soul performers, such as Josephine Baker and a young James Brown, with floral patterns on cushioned seats and booths.



The lower level bistro is the largest testimonial to Marvin Gaye through the vibrant atmosphere, full of energy with closely set tables to inspire patron interaction. The largest mural features Gaye in gold, framed in black, red, and white. This painting is the work of Nick Pimental and Brian Liu.

Through a philosophy of service, interaction, and education, Marvin seeks to create a culinary renaissance in D.C. One of the most popular fusion dishes is the Southern-fried (free-range) chicken on a Belgian waffle. Another fascinating mix is the shrimp and grits, with cheese made and distributed by monks. Managed by Executive Chef James Claudio, a graduate of the California Culinary Institute, and Executive Sous Chef Jonathan Nickerson, the kitchen develops many other interesting cuisine mash-ups.

The emphasis on beer is visible by the 40 to 50 bottles available at the patio, as well as various ales on draft. The Goose Island Brewmaster collaborated with Marvin for a dinner

event aimed at pairing several of the brewery's labels with particular dishes, some also cooked with beer, for 65 people. Through programs like these, Marvin endeavors to treat beer as wine, in finding ways to incorporate specific beer pairings as a component of a shared meal to accent various flavors. Tom Bulleit, for Bulleit Bourbon also participated in an evening experience

of whiskey and bourbon tasting, for the D.C. launch of Bulleit Rye. The spirit events are heavily influenced by clientele with an affinity for cigars, and Marvin is attempting to schedule cigar-oriented functions in the near future.



The Shaw neighborhood has served as a hub for the burgeoning Black America for years, and Marvin seeks to continue this tradition. The business is a devoted supporter of the arts, sponsoring fundraising for the Emerge Art Fair. If you desire a lively and friendly night, or to savor your favorite stogie under the D.C. sky, visit

the soulful blend of Marvin's bistro or rooftop in this singular setting. More information on Marvin is available at <http://www.marvindc.com>.



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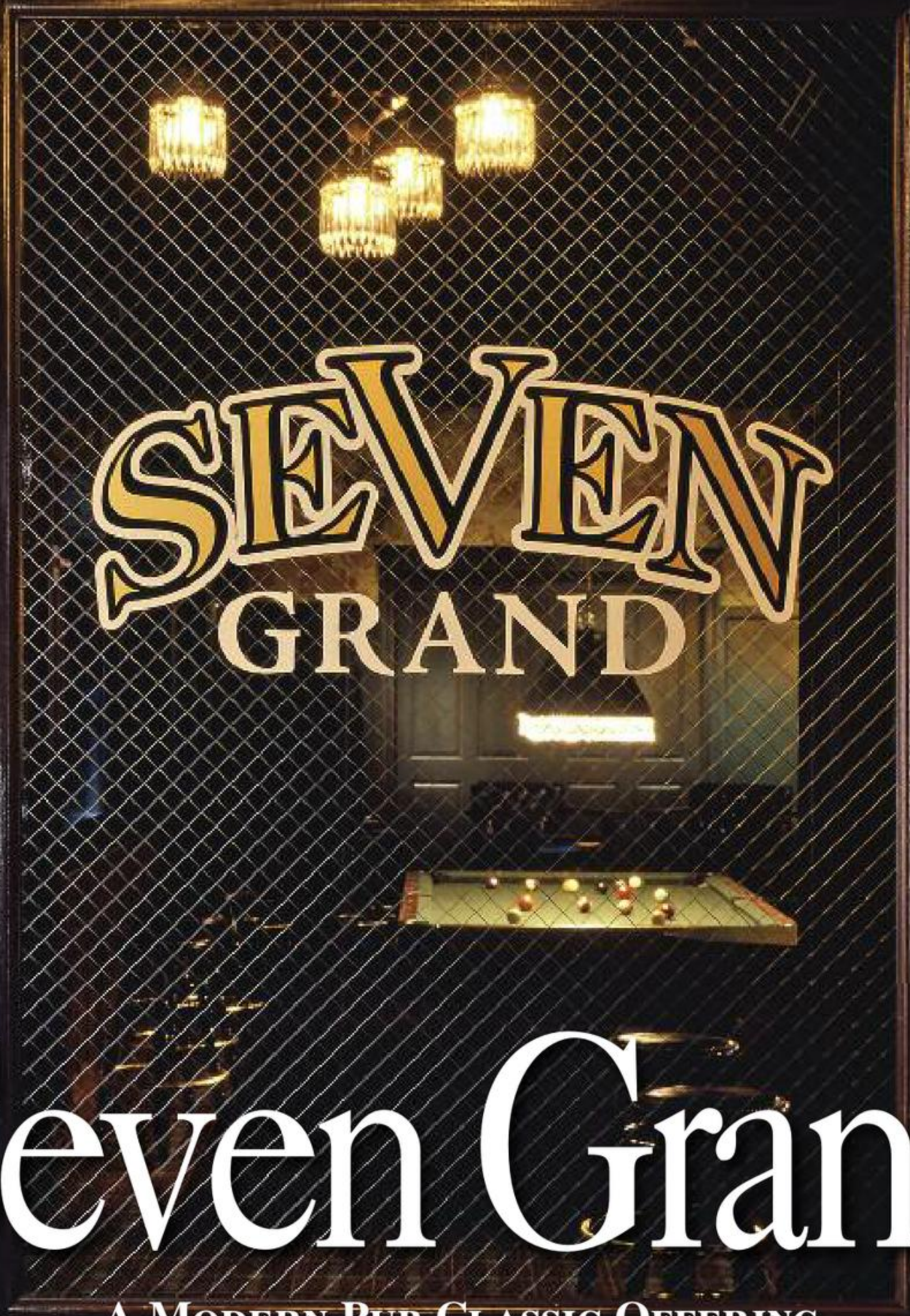
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SEVEN GRAND

Seven Grand

A MODERN PUB CLASSIC OFFERING
OVER 300 WHISKIES AND CIGAR PAIRINGS

by KATHERINE PEACH



Rows of glass bottles line shelves that climb towards the ceiling boasting 21-year old rye, Old Rip Van Winkle bourbon, and of course, a few selections of Maker's Mark. The astonishing whiskey collection is Seven Grand's signature. Host to over 300 whiskeys from nearly every type of bourbon, rye, Irish whiskey, and Scotch imaginable, it's no wonder that Seven Grand has been luring in drinkers with discerning taste for the better part of five years.

Seven Grand is one of the few bars attributed to the mixology revival in L.A., which shook awake the long slumbering cocktail hour. Opened by nightlife czar Cedd Moses in 2007, the whiskey bar pays homage to Hollywood's Golden era when L.A. was a well-liquored machine. Part Irish pub, part hunting lodge for the old boys, Seven Grand is a rare welcome for cigar lovers in L.A., offering a covered outdoor patio that ensures plenty of ventilation.

Seven Grand conjures up the image of Teddy Roosevelt sitting comfortably at the walnut bar, swapping stories from out on the hunt. Dark wood panels and plaid carpeting further evoke the big game feel. A few mounted jackalopes keep watch with mouths too full to comment—they obligingly hold

crystal chandeliers—as the catch of the day grows larger with each round of libations. The dimly-lit lounge compliments the air of mystery, leaving only the mythical creatures to weigh in on how tall the tales really are.

A fantastic distinguishing feature of the bar is the newly minted cigar menu. The menu focuses on local cigar brands that pair well with whiskeys, especially Irish selections such as Bushmills Black with distinct sherry notes. The selective cigar program breaks down what filler, binder, and wrapper is used, as well as where it's from. These cigars are “outstanding for the price,” and might not get as much attention, said Seven Grand cigar magnate, Andrew Abrahamson. Tatuaje, meaning tattoo in Spanish, is one such brand that started in L.A. and has received numerous awards for its Cuban-seed tobacco.

Any cigar devotee, or curious novice, may peruse the humidor to find a full-bodied cigar to pair with bourbon, or a mild smoke to pair with Scotch. Plaques take away the guesswork, so guests can browse at their convenience and still know what to expect. Abrahamson recommended the Casa Magna Robusto, a top rated brand for both flavor and value. A complete 25-page book details content and pairing information to further elevate the selection process.



Booths on the patio allow cigar enthusiasts to relax in the night air, without having to deal with the crowds that gather late at night. Arguably the best nights are enjoyed Monday through Wednesday, when crowds are sparse and live music presents traditional jazz or silken blues. On Wednesdays, the members-only Whiskey Society meets for one of the more than 30 tastings held each year. A Bushmills Master Distiller will educate tasters about grains and processes before the group saunters out towards the house band.

For a less formal drink selection, a whiskey sour is a tried and true drink, simple in essence—lemon, sugar, whiskey—yet it is anything but understated when served with the right smooth bourbon or tart rye whiskey. Seven Grand takes their spirits as seriously as their sour, blending Japanese Yamakazi 12-year with sweet orange and a touch of ginger. This is not your grandmother's cocktail.

For anyone who fears a dark liquor, or conceivably for those that are ac-



gathering of rums as well as 12 rotational taps sure to wet the palate just the same.

Sipping a lauded Seven Grand-style mint julep conjures up thoughts of Hemmingway, another bar fly sure to quietly admire the well-dressed crowd. The bar also boasts a 150-year-old emerald green pool table ready for some friendly competition, which may depend on the number of Sazeracs consumed. Maybe try an old fashioned and strike up a conversation next to the jukebox, anyone who stops here for single malt must have something interesting to say.



Whether just fresh from the office or finishing the night with some free-form jazz, Seven Grand offers a whiskey selection like none I've seen, and a great atmosphere to enjoy a cigar. A staple in the growing list of downtown L.A. haunts, Seven Grand might be considered a modern classic in the land of film and hooch.

customed to more fruit garnish on a drink, you have options too. The Vanilla Cream Punch is a creamy invention made with limited-edition "Seven Grand Single Barrel" wheat whiskey spiced with cherry and vanilla. Pour that over shaved ice with fresh nutmeg, and not many will complain about the bite of some dark spirits.

But this is not about machismo, the patrons are the first to admit that the skilled mixologists have made more than a few whiskey converts. Bartenders wear more than just pin striped vests, but also open ears to inquiries about the range of spirits and the specific needs for a good drink. The bar is also host to an exotic

Visit Seven Grand yourself to view the enormous whiskey selection at: 515 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles, CA. You can also view the menu and more information online at <http://213nightlife.com/seven-grand>





A FEW

MEN'S FASHION

PERSPECTIVES



KNOWING WHAT TO WEAR, DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN KNOWING HOW TO WEAR IT

by J. MARSHALL SENKARIK



There have been volumes written and digested on men's fashion – everything from casual barbecue attire all the way to a business suit and tuxedo. Every periodical catering to men discusses the various styles, trends, and fashions, but something that is rarely covered is how to actually wear what is touted as the next big thing. Putting on the latest fashions does nothing if it is not fitted

right, or worn like an amateur. Just as with any new skill, you must first start with the basics. The most basic and easily erred aspect of a suit is the tie. Different styles and cuts are infinite and ornate, each with their own purpose and history, but that's not what I am going to focus on. What I am going to focus on though is how to wear a tie.

Notice I didn't say how to tie a tie. Anyone can throw a knot into a necktie and go about his business. I'm talking about not just wearing it, but wearing it well. Attention to detail doesn't stop with just your day to day work. People notice how you look, and whether or not you take pride in your appearance. If you look sloppy, they will think you work sloppy, and that you are sloppy. Like it or not, people evaluate you the moment they see you, and it can be hard to change a first impression.



First let's start with the basics- the knots. There are many techniques and styles to tying your necktie, each with their own history, and uses. I will outline the four major styles: the Four in Hand knot, also known as a Simple knot; the Half/Single Windsor; the Full/Double Windsor; and the Shell knot.

I wish I could tell you that I learned my knots and styles working in the fashion industry, or the business world, both of which have augmented and polished my techniques, but the truth is far more mundane. My father taught me. He started with a simple knot. A knot that I didn't learn was called the Four in Hand until years later. Over, under, around, and through, it's that easy to remember. It's probably how you've knotted your ties on your Eastern suits since you were a kid, and never even knew it. This is a simple, classic style, and goes best with traditional peaked collars and slim fitting suits.

My personal favorite, and go-to knot, is the Single Windsor. This one is a bit more complicated, but is easy enough once you practice it. It is a Four in Hand knot with an extra loop through the collar. This knot, when tied correctly, comes out to a wide, but flawless triangle. There will be two dimples on the body of the tie just below the knot, and it may take some adjusting to make these even, but the look is outstanding. The Single Windsor is sophisticated without being pretentious, and can work with

either traditional or spread collars. It complements the wide shoulders and broad faces that might be accentuated by a slim Four in Hand knot, and what's more, it tells a potential boss you really do know how to tie a tie.

The Double, or Full Windsor, is a bit larger look than the Single Windsor, and is tied in much the same way. This is a more elegant look that was originally worn by the Duke of Windsor, and was meant to be a bit looser. The Full Windsor is comfortable, but not informal, and a bit of an answer to the ascot – which thankfully no one wears anymore. Many people swear by a Full Windsor knot, and there is certainly a place for it. By all means try it out for yourself, but in my mind this always seems to belong more in a country club than a board room. A Full Windsor is something a groomsman would wear in a tuxedo, or what you'd wear to a cigar event, not what I'd choose to close a deal. If you don't believe me, just take James Bond's word for it. He's the one who said, "Only a cad would wear a Double Windsor." This, by the way, is from Ian Fleming's books. You won't hear Roger Moore or Sean Connery utter this line, but it's still applicable, and with just the right amount of charm and derision suitable for one of my icons.

The Shell knot is a knot that I, admittedly, do not have too much experience with. I have tried it on occasion, and I did not like the twisting involved – it was too easy to make a mistake. It is, however, a sleek and

**EVERY PERIODICAL CATERING TO MEN DISCUSSES
THE VARIOUS STYLES, TRENDS, AND FASHIONS,
BUT SOMETHING THAT IS RARELY COVERED IS HOW
TO ACTUALLY WEAR WHAT IS TOUTED
AS THE NEXT BIG THING**

elegant look that can be pulled off if you practice with it. Give it a shot. You might like how it looks.

Now that we are past a few of the basic styles and knots that go into wearing a tie, I'll touch on something a bit more advanced: how to actually wear it. Most dress shirts that you buy will have one of three types of collars. A traditional, or peaked collar, which is just your basic pointed collar. The majority of your wardrobe likely consists of these. The peaked collar is my basic go-to collar, and can be worn with basically any style of knot or tie, just make sure that it stays pressed and crisp, and though most come with plastic splints already in the collar, you might want to invest in some metal stays to slip in and keep it pointed.

Next is the button down collar. You have probably seen these on some higher end shirts, and may even have a few yourself. They keep your collar flat against the shirt, and look very good with slim knots, like the Four in Hand. I have worn them on occasion with larger knots, but they can, depending on the individual shirt, give off a bunched appearance, so try them out and see if you like the look. Last, and probably the least well known, is the spread collar. The spread collar points out toward the shoulders at wide angles, and was developed to allow more room for substantial knots like the Windsor and its variations. This is a sophisticated and modern look, and can be very professional if it's pulled off, but you have to know how to wear it. I have seen people wear a spread collar with a slim Four in Hand knot – even fashionable celebrities like Taye Diggs is guilty of this on occasion, and I can't stand the look. It gives a wide front with a slim knot that just looks completely out of place.

This next point ought to go without saying, but here it is anyway. Button the top button. Don't be "that guy." You're going to work, or any other semi-formal event, not trying out for a reality TV show. Any time a tie is warranted, it is worth wearing it correctly. If not, then lose the tie altogether and hope that you're not too casual. No one will mention it to you – unless a very good friend reminds you to button up – but you will still be at least partially judged on appearances.

There are many looks that you can play around with in order to figure out what works for you, and that is how one develops their own personal style. Knowing a few simple rules of fashion will give you the confidence and swagger needed to pull off properly wearing a suit and tie, and that little extra is what is needed these days. You cannot remake a first impression, but making a change for the better will always be noticed. Take pride in your appearance and confidence will follow. After all, how you look and how you carry yourself can make all the difference.



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